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Shohat calls for canceling stock market tax

Business community welcomes end of tax

GALIT LIPKIS BECK, SARAH HONIG, and EVELYN GORDON



Finance Minister Avraham Shohat tells the press of his intention to call for cancellation of the stock market tax. (Isaac Harari)

FINANCE Minister Avraham Shohat's announcement that the stock market tax would be canceled met with almost unanimous approval, by industrialists and those involved in the stock market.

Manufacturers Association President Dan Propper said the cancellation was unavoidable given current market conditions.

"Industry is dependent on the stock market to raise capital and grow, and we welcome every measure to facilitate this. In addition to tax problems, there are additional problems which hinder the market's growth, the main one being high interest rates."

Shohat's announcement of the cancellation was made at 4:30, too late to influence trading on the stock market.

By the end of the day, the Two-Sided index declined by 0.6%, and the Maof by 0.9%, while the Karam, catching up with Sunday's gains, rose by 2.5%. Turnover was NIS 96.7 million. The Two-Sided market contributed NIS 75.8m. and the Karam NIS 20.9m.

"I don't know how the stock market will react to the news, since interest rates remain a problem," said Aharon Dovrat, general manager of the Dovrat-

Shrem investment company.

"Hopefully, the market will correct the damage caused. It is necessary to regain the market's confidence. The market will rise if investors regain confidence and interest rates drop," he said.

Coalition MKs by and large leapt to Shohat's defense, while the opposition gleefully rushed in

for the kill.

"I had urged the repeal of this moronic tax to begin with," Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu said. "And I can now promise unequivocally that a future Likud government will also do away with the government's latest travesty, the organization tax, a Bolshevik highway robbery, which

forces even non-Histadrut members to foot the Histadrut's bills."

The only regret Netanyahu had was that the tax "was ever born and that it was not killed earlier. These last few months of nearly comic ups and downs - tragic for those who lost heavily - show the quality of government we are getting."

Labor MK Eli Dayan called on Shohat to resign, saying the government would never regain its credibility if he stayed on.

"Imposing the tax was a mistake to begin with," said Avraham Poraz (Meretz), chief coalition member on the Knesset Finance Committee. "The finance minister did well to admit his mistake."

JOSE ROSENFELD and DAVID MAKOVSKY

IN a dramatic reversal, Finance Minister Avraham Shohat yesterday called for canceling the bourse tax, as political support for the tax crumbled.

"I've decided to recommend to the cabinet on Sunday to totally cancel the stock market tax," Shohat said at a hurriedly convened news conference in his Jerusalem office yesterday afternoon. "I estimate and hope that the cabinet and the Knesset will approve my proposal."

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said he must bear responsibility for the flip-flop on the tax, while praising Shohat's announcement that he planned to repeal it.

Speaking to reporters just after the Shohat announcement, Rabin declared "full confidence" in the finance minister, just a day after blasting him in front of the entire cabinet on how the tax was being mishandled. When asked if Shohat should resign, Rabin declared: "absolutely not."

The prime minister met with Shohat privately yesterday morning. Aides to Rabin say they were not at the meeting, but sources said Shohat knew that Rabin wanted the tax revoked.

Shohat kept his plans to himself throughout the day, not even revealing them to his colleagues at a Knesset Labor faction meeting, which took place before he made his announcement.

After the announcement, Rabin told reporters, "When a minister comes to me with a proposal, and I accept it, the responsibility is mine. I accepted Finance Minister Shohat's idea for a capital gains tax," which came after the big stock drop in early 1994.

"As time went on, it became clear that issues such as offsetting losses made the stock market tax law a complex and complicated idea. It is doubtful that there would have been any [revenue] return this year and I don't know

about next year," he said.

"I prefer to do the right thing now, even though before we accepted a contrary position... The circumstances have changed, demands have changed, and now things must be corrected."

Shohat denied that he was pressured by Rabin to withdraw the tax, saying that he had only informed Rabin of his decision an hour prior to the news conference. However, Rabin's unprecedented attack against Shohat at Sunday's cabinet meeting and the near-unanimous support for the tax's elimination among his fellow ministers, pushed Shohat to give up on the levy.

"My decision to cancel the tax derived from the fact that the cabinet, the Knesset, the party were unable to withstand exaggerated pressures and mistaken perceptions that the tax led to the [stock market] crisis and that the political price to be paid is too high," said Shohat.

Although Shohat in the past attributed concerted attacks against the tax to business interests, he admitted yesterday that the opposition spread beyond those who would directly benefit from the tax's cancellation.

"There's no doubt that those who had an interest in the cancellation of the tax will feel - justifiably so from their perspective - victorious today. However, the pressure went beyond that group to the broader political and public arena," he said.

Shohat made clear that his decision had nothing to do with the slump on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange. "There was no justification for linking the state of the stock market and the imposition of the tax, but, unfortunately a situation was created from a political and psychological standpoint whereby such connection was made," he said.

"The capital gains tax was unjustly turned into a symbol and a battering ram and lost all proportion in the eyes of politicians and

(Continued on Page 2)

Stocks jump 3% as Rabin promises not to tax earnings June 15, 1993

Rabin okays plan for capital gains bill September 5, 1994

Rumors of canceling capital gains tax send stocks surging December 12, 1994

Capital gains tax to go ahead as planned January 1 December 20, 1994

PM blasts Shohat, stock tax may be dead January 30, 1995

Tax u-turn no solution for Rabin's problems

COMMENT
NEIL COHEN

SO the government finally caved in. Yitzhak Rabin listened to industrialists Aharon Dovrat, Shlomo Grofman and Dan Propper, and decided that they had the answers to his problems.

However, the truth is that they had the answers to their problems, not to his or ours. The stock market may celebrate today, but Rabin's real problems are just as real as they were

yesterday. And tomorrow we will get our pay slips and people will realize that scrapping the stock market tax was no panacea.

Who would the stock market tax have affected? Not you or me, but people who own big stakes in publicly traded companies. It almost defies belief that the outcry over the stock market tax, which would have affected a

(Continued on Page 2)

Rabin, Shohat will pay for tax fiasco

COMMENT
SARAH HONIG

THE most telling reaction to the bourse tax about-face came from Labor Secretary-General Nissim Zivli last night.

He measured the entire issue on the scales of political expediency, and came away with the conclusion that "the tax was a mistake to begin with. Its repeal came too late and caused severe damage to the credibility of the prime minister and the govern-

ment. The expectation now is that as the stock market rises, so will the popularity of the prime minister and the government."

What Zivli said is indeed echoed widely in the party, the government and around the prime minister. Their dramatic decline in the polls began with the levying of the stock market tax. The rescinding of the tax was in no

(Continued on Page 2)

Algiers car bomb kills 38

ALGIERS (Renter) - A car bomb killed 38 people and wounded 256 in central Algiers yesterday, Algerian officials said.

Algerian security forces blamed the attack on Moslem fundamentalists.

"Some of the victims are members of the security forces but most of the victims are civilians, particularly children," Interior Ministry official Nouredine Kasdali said.

Full story, Page 4

Israel returns Arava land to Jordan

IN a brief military ceremony, Jordanian army officers yesterday took control of a 340-sq. km. area in the Arava, from a point near the southern tip of the Dead Sea to the southern border crossing.

Knesset Speaker Shevah Weiss initiated an inquiry into why Israel has begun handing territory over to Jordan before the law on the subject passes second and third reading.

Weiss acted after a parliamentary question by Michael Eitan (Likud).

"The government had three months in which to pass the law. Unfortunately, it only brought it [for first reading] last week," said Eitan.

"And then this morning, the media published that the government, without regard for the legislation which needs to be passed

LIAT COLLINS and agencies in the Knesset, was about to hand over territory in a festive ceremony in the Arava."

Weiss asked Police Minister Moshe Shahal, who liaises between the Knesset and the cabinet, to begin an inquiry.

Jordan's Brig.-Gen. Tahsin Shurdom, head of his country's joint borders and security committee, said the withdrawal took place in formal ceremonies at three points along a 170-km. stretch of the border.

Jordan, anxious to show the fruits of the peace accord, played up the occasion. The army flew in journalists by helicopter, and the official media gave it extensive coverage.

"Jordan has achieved full sovereignty over lands that Israel

had occupied," Radio Jordan announced in its main news bulletin.

The main handing-over ceremony was held at Be'er Menuha, about 100 km. north of Eilat. Here, Israel withdrew 6.2 km. In some areas, the pullout was as narrow as 100 meters.

At 11 a.m., Jordanian soldiers used wire cutters to remove barbed-wire fences, making way for a convoy of nearly 30 vehicles and 200 enlisted men to drive through the desert to the new border.

Maj.-Gen. Mohammed Milkawi, commander of Jordan's southern military region, and Brig.-Gen. Yosef Mishlab, accompanied by four senior aides each, met and shook hands across a new wire fence. No time was

(Continued on Page 2)

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Jordanian officers celebrate yesterday as land is transferred from Israel to Jordan.

Mubarak tries to revive Israel-PLO talks

EGYPTIAN President Hosni Mubarak has invited Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to Cairo tomorrow in a bid to restart the frozen peace talks with the Palestinians, the Foreign Ministry said yesterday.

The invitation was conveyed during Peres' meeting over the weekend with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Moussa in Davos, Switzerland.

"Egypt is trying hard to encourage the peace process and rescue it," Mubarak told Egyptian university students yesterday. "This is an essential issue."

Mubarak departed from the ceremony that has characterized his relations with Israel in recent months, praising Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for his "courage"

DAVID MAKOVSKY
and news agencies

in reaching accords with the Palestinians and Jordan.

"The current Israeli government works for peace, and the present Israeli prime minister should be credited for his courage in reaching the Declaration of Principles with the Palestinians and peace with Jordan," Mubarak told the students.

But, he said, some "obstacles" remain, particularly in the negotiations between Israel and Syria. He did not elaborate. His remarks were carried by the official Middle East News Agency.

The statement marked the first known time that Mubarak commended Israel on the peace

treaty with Jordan. He reacted icily when the treaty was signed in October.

Foreign Ministry officials said last night they believe the favorable statement reflects Mubarak's awareness of growing criticism of Rabin in the aftermath of the Beit Lid bombing. They also noted Egyptian Grand Mufti Dr. Mohammed Tantawi's recent statement that he would visit Israel if invited. Officials hope that Tantawi will arrive here after Ramadan, which begins today.

The strain in relations in recent months has centered around Egypt's demand that Israel sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Egypt has said it will not vote for the extension of the pact, unless Israel signs it.

Perhaps it would have been better to have left it as it was, a senior Bank of Israel official said yesterday. Not all taxes are completely fair - that's life, he said.

Or perhaps it might have been wiser for Shohat to have followed the advice of Yoram Gabbai, one of the old Treasury hands, and imposed a small turnover tax. Not totally progressive, but simple, less politically damaging and very easy to collect.

Will Beiga go home? Should he? Anywhere else a Finance Minister would quit, his credibility shot, his loyalty betrayed. But this isn't anywhere else and the signs are that he will try to soldier on.

But with higher taxes on the way and a green new team at the Treasury, there may be more flak to come.

HUSSEIN

(Continued from Page 1)

wasted on niceties or speeches. Shaking Milkawi's hands over the top of the fence, Mishlab said "good-bye" before turning and driving away, ending Israeli participation in the ceremony.

Jordanian soldiers immediately erected a four-meter-high national flag on their side of the fence. In less than 15 minutes, six other Jordanian flags went up on top of a nearby hill, as Jordanian soldiers danced and sang in praise of King Hussein.

The withdrawal is scheduled to be completed by February 10, three months to the day after King Hussein and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin formally ratified the peace treaty.

In his statements, Hussein attacked a vocal minority in Jordan that opposes peace with Israel, saying it must "respect and abide by the opinion of the majority."

On the pullout, Hussein said: "Today, we are witnessing the actual implementation of the terms of the treaty. Within the next few days, the process of movement and repositioning of the two parties on the international borders of the two neighboring states will be completed... without the need for future external supervision or the deployment of international or foreign troops between the two parties."

AN IDF officer was suspended by an investigating committee set up after soldiers shot indiscriminately during a riot at the maximum security jail in Farah, near Nabulus, earlier this month.

The incident occurred when reservists, guarding Palestinian prisoners jailed for violent crimes, confiscated an illegal radio found in one of the tents.

Officer suspended for Farah jail riot

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Hamas activist gets life for aiding Afula bomber

ALON PINKAS

A THREE-judge military court in Jenin yesterday sentenced a Hamas activist to life imprisonment plus 10 years, for the help he gave Raid Zacharna, who carried out last April's Afula suicide bomb attack, which killed eight and wounded 46.

Mohammed Kammel, 19, was also convicted of being a member of Hamas's military arm, Izzadin Kassam.

Court president Maj. Yoram Haniel ruled that Kammel provided Zacharna with all necessary assistance prior to the attack, concealed his movements and harbored the man who prepared the car bomb.

The military prosecutor, Lt. William Hamed, asked for nine consecutive life sentences, for

each of the eight Israelis killed and Zacharna himself.

"The Afula attack became a model to emulate for Hamas. The accused should be punished for expressing his willingness to blow himself up," Lt. Hamed said. According to the detailed indictment, Kammel had asked Zacharna to actively participate in the attack, Zacharna turned him down.

One of the three judges was inclined to accept the prosecution's demand, saying that each and every life taken warrants a commensurate punishment. A second said that since the actual murderer was killed in the attack,

consecutive life sentences are meaningless and asked for one life sentence.

The third judge was more lenient, and said that 13 years' imprisonment would suffice, given the accused's young age and based on the defense's evidence that his assistance was ultimately not crucial to the attack's success.

The court dismissed the defense's contention that one of the confessions Kammel made was obtained by force.

Following deliberations, the judges concluded that Kammel's involvement was serious but not as vital as the prosecution argued. A compromise was reached and Kammel was sentenced to one life term and 10 additional years.

The Third Way goes nationwide

HERB KEINON

THE Third Way movement is in the process of establishing branches throughout the country, as many movement adherents are calling for its leadership to turn it into a political party.

Golan Heights activist and veteran Labor Party activist Yehuda Harel, the head of The Third Way, said the movement is currently building an infrastructure, that would put it in a position from which it would be able to run in an election as a party if such a decision is ever made.

"We should create this option," Harel said.

The Third Way was formed last year as an apolitical group, advocating the Labor Party's "centrist" tradition, which advocates control over the Golan, the Jordan Valley and Greater Jerusalem, including Gush Etzion, while opposing continued rule over the Palestinians.

In addition to Labor members, the movement has, over the year,

attracted interest from people in the Likud, Yit'ud, Tsomet and Meimad.

"There are many who are in favor of the idea of forming a party, and many who are opposed," Harel said, adding that the movement has not yet formally discussed the issue "and will not do so this year."

His implication was that the issue will be open next year.

There recently has been increased cooperation between The Third Way and Rabbi Yehuda Amital's Meimad movement. Although Harel denied there is any talk of Meimad joining The Third Way, both Amital and Meimad's director Yossi Ben-Gal are among the movement's leaders. "This says something," Harel said.

Third Way spokesman Avi Kalstein said the movement is in the process of setting up 10 branches throughout the country, with the first to be established in Jerusalem.

"We are organizing in order to become a broad-based public movement," Kalstein said. "But we are definitely not rejecting the idea of a political party."

Kalstein said the movement will soon be launching a public relations campaign, together with the heads of the Greater Jerusalem Forum, to support continued construction in the settlements around Jerusalem.

Kalstein named eight Labor MKs who have, to varying degrees, been involved in various Third Way activities and forums. He listed, in descending order of involvement, Avigdor Kahalani, Emanuel Zissman, Ya'acov Sheffi, Gedalya Gal, Yoram Lass, Masha Lubelsky, Yosef Vauzun and Rafi Elul.

Naval cadet's death caused by human error

ALON PINKAS

THE naval training accident earlier this month in which a diver, First Sgt. Ran Kimche, drowned, was caused by human error, and not a technical malfunction, a Navy investigation committee concluded yesterday.

The committee submitted its findings to OC Navy Maj.-Gen. Ami Ayalon. According to the report, the exercise took place at night, in stormy waters with powerful undercurrents. Since there was no equipment malfunction,

the report concluded Kimche may have lost consciousness as a result of physical problems, or entanglement in underwater wreckage.

Kimche, a naval commando cadet, was diving with a partner when the rope tying them was severed, but his partner failed to notice this. Navy divers searched

for Kimche in rough seas all night and recovered his body the next morning.

The committee also criticized the search. Ayalon ordered "command measures" be taken against supervising officers and soldiers, but any further disciplinary action is pending a military police report. Command measures may mean dismissal from a course.

Kimche's family was notified of the committee's findings.

FIASCO

(Continued from Page 1)

small measure geared to boost Rabin's and Labor's political prospects and improve their performance in the polls.

The bet in all corners of the political arena is that the dumping of the tax will indeed yield at least a temporary improvement in Rabin's ratings. But even Laborites consider Rabin, along with Finance Minister Avraham Shohat, the single biggest losers of this unprecedented episode, with Labor and the government also suffering some unavoidable damage along the way.

The fear in Labor is that even if Mr. Average Israeli will be happy with untaxed stock market gains for a while, Rabin will not be able to shed the "zigzag" image (a term first applied to him by Shohat with regard to this issue).

Rabin promised not to levy the tax, then did so, then seemed to back away from Shohat and then put his full political weight behind him and then fidgeted again. It is conceded in Labor that the overall image Rabin displayed in this matter is of nervousness and indecision.

For Shohat, the problems are far more immediate. He has, for all intents and purposes, become a lame duck finance minister. He does not have the full backing of the prime minister, the government, or the party. For all of Rabin's promises not to sack him and of Shohat's resolve to carry on, his future seems as secure as was that of his stock market tax.

The small list of winners includes Prime Minister's Office Director-General Shimon Sheves, who crusaded against the tax from the outset - incurring Rabin's wrath in the process.

Economics Minister Shimon Shetret was in Rabin's doghouse for his war on the tax and should be counted among the winners, but Rabin is said to dislike him so intensely that it is not certain he can turn the win into political capital.

The other minister who opposed the tax - Police Minister

Moshe Shohat - is, however, sure to turn a handsome political profit. Word is that he has already staked a claim for the Finance portfolio, believing Shohat will not be able to hold on to it for long.

To hear the rest of the ministers, the impression yesterday was that none of them ever supported the tax and that it was never passed.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres could not resist a jibe at his longtime rival, Rabin: "When I was prime minister I consistently refused to levy such a tax. I considered it most imprudent."

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SHOHAT

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the public," he added.

He defended the original decision to impose the tax.

"I still think [the tax] was, and remains, right and just from the economic perspective and from a social standpoint, for broadening the tax base and for taxing not only work, but capital as well," he said.

What finally changed his mind was Shohat's recent discovery that it will take months before the Treasury is able to collect the tax.

He added, however, that about NIS 400 million in lost revenues will have to be made up by corresponding budget cuts.

Asked whether the defeat of the tax, one of Shohat's major policy initiatives, will lead to his resignation, Shohat said: "I don't see any reason to resign in light of my announcement today."

In deep sorrow we announce the passing of our beloved sister

IRENE SHULER ז"ל

The funeral will be held on Tuesday, January 31, at 2:30 p.m., at Sede Yehoshua Cemetery (previously Neve David), Gate Alef.

Mourning by her sisters: Debby Lisle, Sina Grosshut, Harriet Smith. Her brother: Victor Rosen. Her nephew and wife: Anthony and Diana Smith. Her Cousin: Erna Chovers.

Shiva at 6 Habroshim St., Carmel, Haifa



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The members of the Board and Staff wish to extend their heartfelt condolences to Board Member Anshel Citron on the death of his sister

VIOLET CITRON ז"ל

With deep sorrow we announce the passing of

Dr. PAUL (Pali) LAX

The funeral will take place today, Tuesday, January 31, 1995 at 1 p.m. at the Shikun Vatikim Cemetery in Netanya

The family: Giselle, Julian, Bertha, Igal, Viola, Alex and family Guy and Karen

Donor country reps gather in Gaza

JON IMMANUEL

MORE than 30 representatives of donor countries met in Gaza City yesterday for the first official donor's conference there since the Palestinian Authority took charge.

The two-day conference of the Local Aid Coordination Committee (LACC) reviewed the problems of last year's development effort and discussed how to improve it this year, an aide to Terje Larsen, the UN special coordinator, said.

Larsen and Odin Knutsen, the resident World Bank representative, chaired the session. The decision to hold the conference in Gaza was taken at the Brussels meeting of donor states in November, when the LACC was established.

PA Chairman Yasser Arafat briefly attended the meeting at the Shawa Cultural Center, and called on donors to accelerate aid because of the closure. A month

ago he claimed that less than 10 percent of the promised funds had arrived.

The donor states have been demanding better accounting procedures before they hand over money. A PA committee is currently examining the issue.

The Brussels conference promised \$120 million in emergency funds to the PA but fell far short. The Palestinians received \$64 million out of \$670 million originally promised for 1994, PA spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh said yesterday.

Israelis who were supposed to be at the conference did not attend yesterday, but were expected today.

The closure and the upswing in terror attacks against Israel were uppermost in everyone's mind yesterday, with speakers warning that both were damaging to the peace process.

Gaza, Jericho residents to get PA passports

THE Palestinian Authority expects to begin distributing passports to Gaza and Jericho residents by mid-February, PA spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh said yesterday.

The issuing of passports was agreed to in Oslo and detailed in Annex 2, Appendix C of the Cairo agreement. It is expected to be accepted as a legal document by most foreign states.

Design '95

On February 17, 1995, the Weekend Magazine will include a prestigious new supplement on Home and Garden Design. Subjects include interior and exterior design, renovation and decoration, kitchens, bathrooms, furniture and more.

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3,000 pray for security

HERB KEINON

AN estimated 3,000 people gathered at the Western Wall yesterday to pray for God's help in light of the current security situation. The special prayers were called for by the chief rabbis.

The prayers took place on Yom Kippur Katan, the day before each new month, on which there is a tradition of saying special penitential prayers. The month of Adar I begins today.

"Our Father and King, annul the plans of our enemies," Chief Rabbi Yisrael Lau chanted. The crowd repeated the words after him.

The gathering was solely one of prayer, with the penitential prayers followed by afternoon and evening services. There were no speeches or political statements.

Nevertheless, some of those who attended did so with political considerations very much on their minds. Ma'aleh Adumim resident Tzvi Liker said he came "to express solidarity with united Jerusalem and, with thousands of others, to reject the position of the government regarding both Israel and Eretz Yisrael."

Someone circulated a leaflet at the Wall entitled "Danger to the security of the country," which contained the name, phone number, and address of the deputy head of the General Security Service. This is classified information.

Kach activists have been waging a campaign against the GSS deputy, claiming he is biased against them and the Right. Last year, a group of former Kach activists tried unsuccessfully to demonstrate in front of the man's home.



Some of the estimated 3,000 people who came to the Western Wall yesterday to pray for an improvement in the security situation. (Ephraim Kishitok)

Another High Court petition filed in wiretap case

EVELYN GORDON

SECURITY firm owner David Spector yesterday petitioned the High Court of Justice against a lower court decision to allow alleged wiretappers Rafi Friedan and Ya'akov Tsur to examine numerous documents not directly related to their case.

Spector has given much information to the police relating to the Ma'ariv-Yediot Aharonot wiretapping scandal. His petition joins a similar petition by the state, which is pending.

Spector charged that his statements to the police included a great deal of professional information relating to his clients, including Yediot and Ha'aretz. Giving this material to Friedan's and Tsur's lawyer, Mordechai Katz, would ensure that it was also passed on to Ma'ariv, with whom Katz works closely, he charged.

According to Spector, Katz has not only had numerous meetings with Ma'ariv executives Ofer Nimrodi and David Ronen, but even served as their go-between with him. Katz, he said, offered him \$100,000 on Nimrodi and Ronen's behalf if he would incriminate Yediot in his statements to the police.

Furthermore, he said, the police have evidence that Katz has received money from Nimrodi and Ronen.

Spector charged that in addition to their interest in his professional secrets, Katz, Nimrodi, and Ronen want to see his statements because they themselves are under investigation by the police, and therefore want to know what Spector has said about them. However, he stressed, this information has nothing to do with Friedan's and Tsur's case.

In fact, he noted, he is not even listed as a prosecution witness in the Friedan-Tsur case, which means that his statements cannot be used as evidence in the trial. This makes them utterly irrelevant, he said.

If the privacy of information given to the police is not protected when not needed for the accused's defense, other people will be deterred from giving such information, Spector added.

Weizman issues apology, denies remarks to Aloni

BATSHEVA TSUR

TWO Meretz ministers yesterday called on President Ezer Weizman to apologize formally to Shulamit Aloni, after Weizman told Israel Television he would do so if he had hurt her feelings.

At the same time, Weizman categorically denied that he had made rude remarks about Aloni during a meeting last week with four MKs, and described media reports to that effect as "utterly baseless."

Last night, the President's Bureau issued the text of a letter from Weizman containing an apology to Aloni.

Responding to a letter from MKs Naomi Hazan (Meretz) and Limor Livnat (Likud), who called on him, "as an individual and a national symbol," to withdraw his remarks, Weizman said: "Not one MK came forward to substantiate the remarks [attributed to me by the media], and I would never have made such remarks. I can merely apologize if anyone was hurt, first and foremost to Minister Shulamit Aloni."

Noting the importance he attaches to the position of president, Weizman expressed the hope that "this unnecessary storm would now blow over."

Of the four MKs at the meeting, Dedi Zucker (Meretz) and Ovadia Eli (Likud) claimed that they had heard nothing denigrating, while

David Mena (Likud) and Yosef Azran (Shas) said the president had called Aloni a *balata* (thick head). Another version said he added the adjective "old."

Mena said he would personally pay for lie detector tests for those present at last week's meeting in an attempt to bolster his claim. But Zucker and Eli called a special press conference at which Zucker stated: "I absolutely didn't hear the president say anything like that or any other words of derision."

Earlier, Weizman had said, "If we assume that something was said that should not have been said, this was not on the basis of [Aloni's being a woman]. It was coincidental. I am prepared to apologize to her as I would to a male minister."

Last night, before Weizman's letter to Hazan and Livnat was made public, Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein appealed to him to withdraw his remarks, noting that many school pupils had complained of how ashamed they were of the language used by MKs and other dignitaries.

And Environment Minister Yossi Sarid said: "Even if the remarks were not made, please deny them."

Aloni herself did not comment. Liat Collins contributed to this report.

NEWS IN BRIEF

IZL man honored in Jerusalem street name

The Jerusalem Municipality has chosen to name a road leading to Teddy Stadium in honor of IZL commander Joshua "Gal" Goldschmidt, who was involved in the King David Hotel bombing and the Deir Yassin attack. The naming of "Gal Boulevard" was personally pushed forward by Mayor Ehud Olmert and protested by Meretz city councillor Anat Hoffman.

Alexander resigns from Habimah

David Alexander has resolved the management crisis at the Habimah National Theater by resigning. Following an extraordinary board meeting convened on Sunday, Alexander announced that despite his earlier refusal to step down, he would now resign his position as general manager. The new general manager is Ya'akov Agmon, who assumes the post tomorrow.

Teacher suspected of breaking child's arm

A Haifa nursery school teacher is suspected of breaking a three-year-old boy's arm when she pulled it hard, and then preventing other teachers from helping him.

According to a complaint filed by a social worker, when the boy's mother came to pick him up, other teachers suggested she take him for a medical check-up, which showed the break. The teacher responsible was suspended by the Education Ministry. Police are investigating.

Orient House owes NIS 3,000 to O56

Orient House, the PLO's Jerusalem headquarters, owes Bezek some NIS 3,000 for use of O56 pornography services, according to a report in *Ha'aretz*.

Some of the building's phone lines have now had the O56 service blocked by the Orient House management, and the press office there said the matter is under investigation.

Zucker seeks affirmative action for women

The Civil Service would have to begin affirmative action for women, under a bill submitted by Law Committee chairman Dedi Zucker (Meretz) and discussed by the committee yesterday. Civil Service Commissioner Yitzhak Galnoor told the committee that in principle, he supports advancing women in the service. According to the Israel Women's Network, women constitute 59 percent of all civil servants, but only 22 percent of the top four ranks.

Liba'i at odds with Law Committee

Justice Minister David Liba'i said he opposes many of the arrangements the Law Committee has agreed on to make it easier to bring the perpetrators of sex crimes to justice. For instance, he said, it would be too expensive to have three judges preside over all sex-crime trials, and improper to remove the accused from the room when the victim is testifying, if this is deemed necessary for the victim's mental health. However, Zucker said the committee plans to proceed with the legislation.

Panel told of progress in help for agunot

Justice Minister David Liba'i told the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women that there had been significant progress on proposals dealing with women whose husbands refuse to divorce them and *agunot* whose husbands have disappeared. He praised the rabbinical courts for locating 27 husbands who had disappeared in Israel and 31 abroad. All the men later granted their wives divorces.

MDA: Clerks sent to Beit Lid for lack of staff

LIAT COLLINS

MAGEN DAVID Adom is suffering from such a serious lack of manpower that it called on clerks and other administrative workers to help evacuate the wounded from the Beit Lid bombing.

Yisrael Peled, director of MDA's central region, told the Knesset Interior Committee yesterday that the organization is so short of staff that when the emergency call first came in, he had no free ambulances and had to call on desk personnel to act as accompanying medics in the vehicles he called in from surrounding cities.

Altogether, 17 regular ambulances and four intensive care ambulances were used.

"It would be foolish to ignore the obvious conclusions. If this had happened in the North or South, it could have been very serious," said Peled.

He said the lack of an accompanying medic means that as soon as the driver takes the wheel, there is no one to treat the patient. He said, however, that none of the wounded had suffered as a result.

Committee chairman Yehoshua Matza (Likud) told Peled not to use the opportunity to ask for more funds. MK Ron Nahman (Likud) called the situation "very serious."

Central District Police Chief Cmdr. Shlomo Aharonishky told the committee that the two suicide bombers each carried 5 kg-10 kg of TNT, to which nails were added to cause more serious wounds.

Suspected accomplice in stock fraud freed on NIS 500,000 bail

RAINE MARCUS

BINYAMIN Einhorn, 40, suspected of helping stockbrokers defraud the public, was released on NIS 500,000 bail by Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court yesterday.

The hearing followed last week's arrests of Haim Regev, investments manager of Bank Hapoalim's Psagot mutual fund, and Dovrat-Shrem Investments Management director Yoram Nagler. The two are suspected of pocketing NIS 20 million in profits from

illegal stock manipulation. After six days in custody, Nagler was placed under house arrest on Sunday and ordered to put up NIS 750,000 bail. Regev is still in detention.

Securities Authority investigators Michal Barak and Reuven Kovent alleged that Einhorn, at Nagler's behest, opened bank accounts in his name and in his

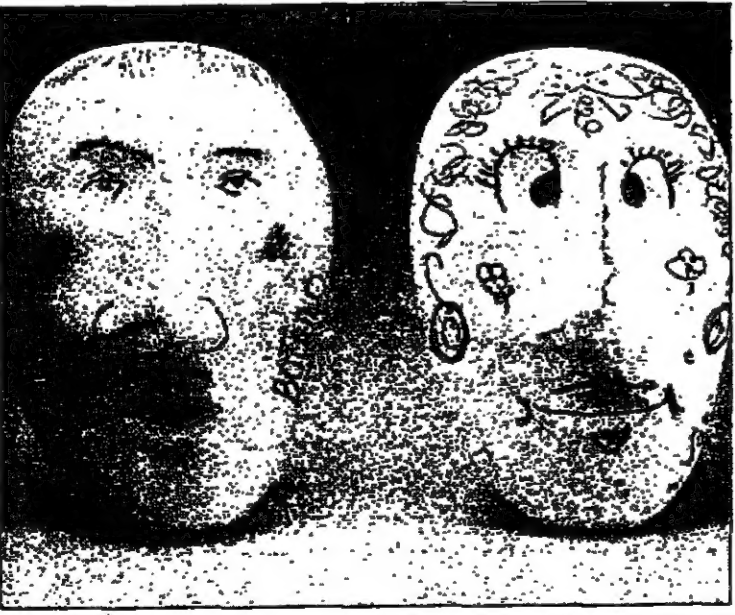
wife's name, for Nagler to use to trade in securities and deposit the profits. In return, Einhorn allegedly received cash payments.

At Regev and Nagler's hearing last week, the investigators said the two had used numerous bank accounts for their illegal transactions, registered in the names of friends and family members.

Einhorn is also suspected of at-

tempting to interfere with the investigation by coordinating his version of events with Koby Ramot, director of Ogen Investments, who was arrested last year in connection with stock manipulations.

The two had allegedly agreed that in the event of Einhorn's arrest, he, Einhorn would say that he initiated the opening of the accounts, and was not asked to do so by others.



Auction raises \$800,000 for Akim

HELEN KAYE

A TWIN mask by Colombian artists Fernando Botero and Sophia Vari (shown at left) fetched \$38,000 at the charity auction held Sunday night for Akim, the Israeli Association for the Rehabilitation of the Mentally Handicapped.

Altogether, the 220 masks earned some \$800,000 for the organization, "about twice as much as we realistically expected," said Friends of Akim spokeswoman Irit Bergebel.

The auction was held at the Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center with relays to other locations, including Washington, New York,

and Paris. Other top sellers included the mask decorated by President Ezer Weizman, which sold for \$23,000, and a mask by pop sculptor Ya'acov Agam, which netted \$30,000.

Other local and world notables who donated their talents to decorate the masks included Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, director Oliver Stone, UK Prime Minister John Major, and actress Whoopi Goldberg.

Only around 90 masks actually came under the hammer. The rest were sold through written bids.

Trial opens for elderly couple accused of murdering daughter

RAINE MARCUS

THE trial of Miriam and Michael Weissman, both charged with murdering their daughter Natalie on December 14, opened in Tel Aviv District Court yesterday.

The two are accused of suffocating Natalie while she was sleeping, apparently because they feared she would harm her nine-year-old daughter.

Natalie Weissman, 33, an alcoholic, had earlier tried to throw

her daughter down the stairs of a Bat Yam shopping mall.

Police sources previously suspected that Miriam Weissman, 74, actually murdered her daughter, but she denied this. She is currently being held in custody in the Abu Kabir lock-up, while her husband Michael, 72, who suffers from cancer, is in the hospital wing of Ramle's Ayalon Prison.

After a plea hearing, scheduled for February 19, Miriam Weissman will probably be transferred to the Neveh Tirza Prison. Bail is not offered to murder suspects.

Originally, a magistrate's court judge appointed lawyer Eyal Shomroni-Cohen to defend the couple, but yesterday Shomroni-Cohen announced that he would only represent Michael Weiss-

man. "In view of the evidence, the couple stand a better chance if they are represented separately," said Shomroni-Cohen.

Judges Amnon Strashnov, Sara Sirota and Amnon Hummer ordered the appointment of an another lawyer to represent Miriam Weissman.

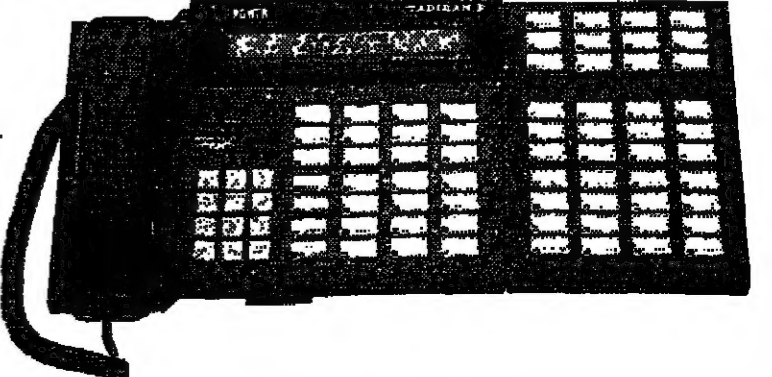
Both defendants have denied all allegations.

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Rabin meets pupils at Rene Cassin High School

BATSHEVA TSUR

THE government will consider bringing in another 20,000-25,000 foreign workers if this is necessary to maintain the closure of the territories and break the country's dependence on Palestinian workers, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said yesterday.

There are already some 42,000 European laborers with work permits here, he said, adding that until the full closure was restored last week, some 46,000 Palestinians entered Israel daily to work.

Rabin was speaking at a meeting with 12th-graders at the Rene Cassin High School in Jerusalem. Two of the school's graduates were killed in last week's bombing at Beit Lid, and another four have died in the army during the past few months. A seventh graduate is in critical condition following a shooting exchange with gunmen in Lebanon last week.

Rabin, who was accompanied by Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein, spent close to two hours speaking to the pupils and their teachers.

"Let's be honest. The Palestinians are a separate entity from the religious, national, and political points of view. We are fighting over the same country. Whoever does not recognize this, is making a mistake," Rabin told some 350 pupils, who repeatedly applauded as he answered their questions.

"But we must have fewer Gazans in Israel. We must have less Israeli control [over them]. We must be physically separated, even if there are still economic ties. And we must help find an

economic solution for them, which can come from abroad."

Justifying the decision to continue the peace talks, Rabin said that any other move would be "a victory for the suicide bombers of Beit Lid, Afula, Hadera, and Tel Aviv."

Without the PLO as its partner, Israel would have to deal with the Islamic fundamentalists, he warned. "We can't choose our neighbors. That is who we have."

Although clearly excited by the appearance of the ministers, some of the pupils admitted feeling insecure about their impending induction and upset about the atmosphere in the school.

"It's depressing to see the death notices every time we walk into the gate," said Dror Berel. "We are pupils and are soon going to be soldiers. They took the same path just a short while ago."

Natty, who said he could not decide whether he would apply for a combat unit, described the stunned silence last week when they learned that two more graduates had lost their lives.

"We just couldn't say a word. But the next day, people started having political arguments. We still can't shake the feelings of sadness," he said.

"We weren't able to study at all. The teachers chatted with us, tried to comfort those who knew the two. They had to send us home because no one could concentrate," said Oded Kover. "We will never get over the feeling that so many among us have died."

Algiers car bomb kills 38, wounds over 250

News agencies
ALGIERS

A car bomb exploded along a crowded sidewalk near Algiers' main police station yesterday, killing at least 38 people and injuring 256, the state radio said.

It was by far the worst bombing during a three-year insurgency by Islamic militants that has killed at least 15,000 people.

The explosion, on Amirouche Street, took place less than 24 hours after the armed wing of Algeria's outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) told its militants to increase their killings in the Muslim holy month of Ramadan which coincides with February.

The call to kill, reported in the Algerian Arab-language *al-Hayat al-Arabiya* and made by the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), added: "If the authorities are preoccupied today with the security situation, they should wait to see even more during this month (Ramadan), because the battle will be great."

"I saw at least four bodies of people who had been killed and covered with white sheets," one witness said, adding that he was on the scene about three minutes after the blast.

The car bomb went off as a bus, coming from Martyrs Square near the seafont, was passing the scene, the radio said.

The witness, who asked not to be identified, said at least four cars caught fire and the hole in the pavement was just outside the central police station.

"I saw policemen splashed with blood but I was not sure if it was their own blood or that of victims they were trying to save," he said.

All the windows in nearby buildings, including that of the former Agriculture Ministry headquarters now housing the Saudi-Algerian al-Baraka Bank,



A woman is helped away from the wreckage of the car bomb which exploded in Algiers yesterday. (AP)

were shattered.

"Passersby were wounded apparently by shards of glass falling on their heads," the witness added.

The car carrying the bomb was destroyed, and thick smoke rose from other burning cars nearby. State radio called for doctors to come in and appealed for blood donors.

Security forces cordoned off the area where the blast occurred. Sporadic automatic gunfire was heard shortly after the explosion.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility.

Amirouche Street runs past the heavily guarded central police station and forms a link between May First Square and Martyrs Square—the route taken by thousands of

Algerians on Sunday, protesting at "terrorism" and supporting the policies of President Liamine Zeroual.

Bombs, however, have increasingly been used in the confrontation between fundamentalist Islamic extremists and the military-backed government. There have been about a half-dozen previous car-bombings, but none killed

more than five people.

The rebellion began after the government canceled January 1992 elections that the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front was expected to win.

Victims of the confrontation include nearly 30 journalists and nearly 80 foreigners. Most foreigners have left the country because of the uprising.

Closure forcing many Jerusalem schools to shut down

BILL HUTMAN and JON IMMANUEL

THE closure of the territories has shut down dozens of Arab schools in Jerusalem, as most of their teachers are live in the areas and are not allowed into the city, the Palestinian Teachers Union said yesterday.

"The education system has been thoroughly paralyzed," the union said, in a statement released after a protest meeting at Orient House, the PLO headquarters in the capital.

Union spokesman Samir Jundi said that some 25,000 pupils attended the private schools, which are not operating. Public schools employ mostly teachers with Jerusalem identity cards and are not affected by the closure.

"We call upon all peace-loving forces, international organizations ... for immediate action to lift this abominable siege," the union said.

Jundi said that the union plans a series of protests this week to draw attention to the problem.

"We are sorry for what happened at Beit Lid, but all Palestinians should not be punished for what happened," Jundi said.

Palestinian journalists also took to the street to protest the closure, charging that special exceptions should be made to allow them to do their jobs.

About 30 journalists, many working for the foreign media, held a brief demonstration at the A-Ram army checkpoint.

Government Press Office director Uri Dromi said exceptions to the closure could not be made, even for the media.

"The closure is not the problem of 50 or so Palestinian journalists, but of 50,000 Palestinians who are peace-loving and innocent," Dromi told Israel Radio.

The protests by the teachers

and journalists came after Palestinian businessmen in Jerusalem earlier this week appealed for international intervention to end the closure.

The businessmen charged that the closure was particularly harsh, coming at the start of the Ramadan holiday.

Palestinians responded negatively to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's decision to maintain the closure for an additional week, saying that political measures by Israel, not security measures by Palestinians, are the solution.

Palestinian Authority spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh said that "the closing of Gaza is a collective punishment. It will raise the tension. The solution to the security problem is the final and accurate implementation of the peace accords in the West Bank. Then security there will be the same as in Gaza."

In the Abu Dis College of Science and Technology, where troops arrested 21 suspected Islamic radicals last Friday, students gathered to hear Islamic and Palestinian Authority leaders condemn the raid as an attack on Palestinian rights in Jerusalem.

"Jerusalem will continue to be a thorn in the throat of the occupation," said Economics Minister Ahmed Qreia, (Abu Ala) who initiated the Oslo talks.

Abu Dis is inside the Jordanian municipal boundaries of Jerusalem, but was left out of the Israeli municipal borders.

US Consul-General Edward Abington, who met Arafat in Gaza yesterday, said he is concerned by the closure, but added: "The Palestinian people and leadership must ... reject terrorism, such as occurred Sunday a week ago, that is killing the peace process," according to the Associated Press.

PA-appointed mufti ushers in Ramadan

BILL HUTMAN

IGNORING the ban on Palestinian Authority activity in Jerusalem, the PA-appointed mufti and leading Moslem religious leaders met in the Old City last night to declare the start of Ramadan.

The Jordanian-appointed mufti, who is recognized by Israel and traditionally announces the start of Ramadan, was not present. Instead, Mufti Akrim Sabri oversaw the proceedings, at the Wakf offices just outside the Temple Mount.

The religious leaders determined Ramadan would start today, according to a spotting of the moon and decisions of neighboring countries.

Most of the religious leaders at the meeting were from the administered territories. A civil administration spokeswoman said they did not have permits to be in the city.

Jerusalem police officers, however, sat outside the building and did not act to halt the meeting.

"I am the mufti, appointed by the Palestinian Authority, of all the Palestinian people, in Jerusalem, in the West Bank, Gaza, and in Israel," Sabri told *The Jerusalem Post*.

"There is no one who questions my authority," Sabri added.

Rains bring chaos to Europe

AMSTERDAM (Reuters) - Torrential January rains forced the evacuation of tens of thousands of people in northeastern Europe and German and French officials yesterday proclaimed the situation the "Flood of the Century."

At least 15 deaths in France have been attributed to the weather over the past week and five people are missing. The death toll in Belgium was put at six and in Germany officials said at least three had died. One man was reported drowned in Britain over the weekend but no flood-related deaths have been recorded so far in the Netherlands.

Flooding in the German Rhineland city of Cologne beat the previous record set at the end of 1993 and officials expected water levels to go on rising.

In the Netherlands, the biggest Dutch civilian evacuation for more than 40 years was under way yesterday. Twenty-five thousand people in the eastern province of Gelderland were told to flee the rising Rhine and 9,000 have been evacuated in Limburg province along the river Mas (Meuse).

Local Dutch officials were contemplating whether to let 47,000 more people in the two provinces to abandon their homes.

France said it would provide emergency financial aid to flood victims in the northeast of the country.

"In many areas, we are talking about the flood of the century," French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur's office said in a statement. "Nearly half the country has been affected."

Belgian officials reported the situation in the southern part of their country was deteriorating but

evacuations had so far been kept to a minimum. Emergency workers said this year's floods were worst reaching the levels of December 1993, the worst for more than 60 years in Belgium.

In Cologne, the water level reached 10.64 metres, exceeding the 10.63-metre mark hit at Christmas 1993 and sending more murky water gushing over flood barriers into the old town, the city's entertainment centre.

About 30,000 Cologne residents have been affected by the floods so far. The environment minister of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, where Cologne is located, appealed to "flood tourists" to stay at home and stop obstructing rescue work.

Germany's river Main also went on rising and officials feared it would flood the historic Roemerberg area near the town hall in the country's financial capital, Frankfurt.

But spokesmen for Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank and Commerzbank, whose skyscraper headquarters dominate the Frankfurt skyline, said they had not yet been affected by the rising waters. They said their sensitive accounting centres, the bank's nerve centres, lay outside the floodwaters' reach.

European oil and commodities barges were at a standstill yesterday after the Netherlands and Germany closed inland rivers to shipping because of the flooding. No barge movements were expected until at least Friday.

In Britain, meteorologists were predicting the wettest January in decades in many areas and there were flood alerts in southwestern England.

Ito sanctions 'unfair' defense in O.J. trial

LOS ANGELES (AP) - The judge punished O.J. Simpson's lawyers yesterday for hiding the identity of last-minute witnesses, saying they acted on purpose to gain an "unfair" advantage.

But he refused a prosecution bid to delay the trial.

Superior Court Judge Lance Ito said he would instruct jurors to disregard the mention of 14 separate witnesses in the defense opening statement and forbid defense attorneys from calling any of those people as witnesses until the end of their case.

Ito also said he would consider barring the defense from using some of the witnesses at all if the prosecution doesn't have time to investigate them properly.

He ordered the defense to disclose at once statements of all expert witnesses, expressing skepticism about the defense's

claim that some experts didn't provide written reports.

"It seems implausible that such experts' statements or reports are not presently in existence, given the complexity of this case, the pre-eminence of the experts involved, the number of attorneys involved and the court's experience with the presentation of expert witnesses," Ito said in a five-page written ruling.

The judge harshly criticized defense attorneys for violating a "reciprocal discovery" law by holding back the identity of the 14 witnesses and failing to disclose other claims before opening statements.

"Defense counsel, recognizing the obvious value of some of these witnesses and their belatedly disclosed statements, featured them prominently in the first segment of the defense opening statement," the judge said.

Writer Gerald Durrell dies

LONDON (Reuters) - British writer and zoologist Gerald Durrell, whose best-sellers were full of engaging studies of animal and human behavior, died yesterday aged 70, his zoo said in a statement.

Durrell, known for books such as *My Family and Other Animals* and *The Overloaded Ark*, died at Jersey General Hospital in the Channel Islands following complications after a liver transplant last April.

His wife Lee and Jeremy Mallinson, director of his zoo in Jersey, were at his bedside when he died.

Though less highly-regarded as a writer than his elder brother Lawrence - author of the lyrical masterpiece *Alexandria Quartet* - Gerald Durrell had almost 30

best-sellers to his name.

My Family and Other Animals, written in 1956, depicted his childhood forays into the natural world on the Greek island of Corfu. It sold nearly one million copies.

But more recently Durrell dedicated his life to his zoo which attracts more than 200,000 visitors every year.

The sanctuary aimed to save animals threatened with extinction by breeding programmes. He once said: "I look upon myself as a kind of hairy Florence Nightingale."

Born in Jamshedpur in India, Durrell quickly expressed interest in zoology. A plump, flamboyant and gregarious figure, Durrell was also well known as a broadcaster.

Fighting in Bosnia threatens peace plan

SARAJEVO (AP) - Fighting raged in northwest Bosnia yesterday as warring factions again ignored timetables for implementing key terms of a shaky, month-old truce.

Some of the worst fighting was around the northwestern town of Velika Kladusa, in the so-called Bihać pocket, where outgunned government troops have been fighting rebel Serbs from Bosnia and nearby Croatia, and Moslem renegades allied with them.

UN officials said government troops in recent days fell back up to five km from the town. But yesterday a UN spokesman, Lt. Col. Gary Coward, said, "We believe the tide may be turning in favor of the Bosnian Army."

He said that many of over 1,000 shells fired in the 24 hours to yesterday morning appeared to be coming from the government side.

Another UN spokesman, Alexander Ivankov, said that if the situation worsens further for the renegade Moslem forces, up to 30,000 refugees may soon be forced out of Bosnia.

Farther south, government forces apparently pushed Croatian Serb fighters back across the border into Croatia, according to Coward.

But the Velikaton radio station controlled by renegade Moslem commander Fikret Abdic said his forces were taking ground from

Bosnian government troops and seizing strategic points.

The broadcast reported that about 100 government soldiers had been killed and dozens taken prisoner in recent clashes. The claim was not independently verified.

Croatian Serbs and Moslems loyal to Abdic are allied with the Bosnian Serbs but did not sign a Dec. 31 truce that was supposed to lay the groundwork for new negotiations on a permanent peace. In fact, key provisions of the truce remain unimplemented, and stubborn fighting, mainly around the Bihać pocket, has made a mockery of what is supposed to be four-month-long truce.

One of those provisions - plans to evacuate nearly 200 people from the eastern enclave of government-controlled Gorazde - suffered another setback yesterday. SRNA, the Bosnian Serb news agency, said it was postponed until today, apparently because Bosnian Serb military leaders wanted more Serbs taken out than were listed on evacuation rolls. SRNA said 13, instead of the requested 22 Serbs, were on a UN list of nearly 200 prospective evacuees.

Talks set for yesterday to complete details about re-opening a Serb-controlled route out of Sarajevo - another truce provision - also were put on hold until today after Bosnian Serbs backed out of the meeting, UN officials said.

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Ecuador announces war tax

MACAS, Ecuador (AP) — Foreign leaders appealed yesterday to Ecuador and Peru to negotiate a peaceful end to a half-century dispute over a mineral-rich region where there have been four days of border skirmishes.

But Ecuador yesterday announced a new tax to pay for the war.

Ecuador's government ordered state employees to contribute two days of their annual salaries to help pay for the cost of renewed dispute, which centers over an 80-km portion of southern Ecuador and northern Peru near the Cenepa River.

"These are urgent and necessary economic measures," Ecuador's government spokesman, Enrique Proano, said in announcing the new tax. A vehicle tax of 2 percent is being proposed to Congress, he said.

On Sunday, Peru and Ecuador traded charges over who was the aggressor in fighting that has claimed dozens of lives. Each country said it was fighting on its own territory.

Sunday was the 53rd anniversary of the Rio Protocol that ended a war between the two countries over their sparsely populated border. Ecuador has never reconciled itself to the settlement, arguing it was robbed of half its territory when a map delineating the region was agreed to in 1942.

The latest fighting is centered along a portion of the border that has never been marked. The disputed jungle area known as the Cordillera del Condor has gold, uranium and possibly oil reserves.

Ecuador staked out its claim to the area with military posts. It was the site of bloody clashes between the two countries in 1981.

Paraguay President Juan Carlos Wasmosy told reporters yesterday at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, that US Secretary of State Warren Christopher would travel to Ecuador and Peru soon to try to mediate. There was no confirmation of that report in Washington.

Wasmosy said more than one country would be needed to resolve the conflict, which he described as both political and economic, and offered the help of Latin American governments. Uruguay overnight offered to mediate as well under the auspices of the Organization of American States.

Quake victims too busy for emperor

NISHINOMIYA (AP) — Two weeks after the devastating earthquake in western Japan, Emperor Akihito is finally coming to visit victims. But Chieko Komura would rather have a warm place to stay — and one that didn't have to be shared with 1,100 other people.

"It may make some people here happy, but I'm too busy just getting by day to day," said a shivering Komura of the emperor's visit as she bundled up in the bitter cold that swept this region yesterday.

The Nishinomiya City Gymnasium, where Komura and 1,100 other refugees from the Jan. 17 quake are staying, will be one of Emperor Akihito's first stops when he visits quake victims for the first time today.

The gym has no heat and no hot water. But Akihito will hardly be seeing the worst. At least the gym offers three meals a day, running water, fruit, some used clothes; other evacuation centers don't even have that.

"We have gotten a lot of media attention so people tend to send contributions to us," said Isao Sakamoto, the city official responsible for the shelter. "It isn't as good as this everywhere."

As of yesterday, the death toll from Japan's worst earthquake in 70 years stood at 5,096, mostly in the port city of Kobe and suburbs such as Nishinomiya.

Thirteen people were still missing, 26,801 people were injured.

Largest terror trial in US history begins

NEW YORK (AP) — The largest terrorism trial in US history gets underway in a heavily guarded courtroom yesterday with opening statements and a judge's warning that religion is not on trial.

Prosecutors will try to show that Egyptian Sheikh Omar Abdel-Rahman and 11 other Muslims planned a "war of urban terrorism" that could have killed hundreds if not thousands of people.

Lawyers for Abdel-Rahman, the 56-year-old blind cleric alleged to have headed the conspiracy, charge that he's being prosecuted for his beliefs. If convicted, he could face life in prison.

After the attorneys speak, the judge has his own statements for the jury.

"There is no religion on trial here," US District Judge Michael Mukasey said in a preliminary draft of instructions he

would make to the jury.

If someone breaks the law, "the fact that it is undertaken in the name of religion is no defense whatsoever," the draft states.

The anxiety accompanying the trial was evident yesterday when an abandoned briefcase on a subway platform prompted transit officials to divert subway service away from Grand Central Station in Midtown Manhattan for an hour at the height of the morning rush hour.

"Mindful of a terrorist trial beginning in Manhattan this morning," police decided to be extra cautious, said transit police spokesman Al O'Leary. The bomb squad was called in but the briefcase did not turn out to be dangerous.

The trial is the second chapter in the prosecution of a group allegedly responsible for the 1990 assassination of Rabbi Meir Kahane, the founder of the Jewish Defense League, and the Feb. 26, 1993 World Trade Center bombing, which killed six people and injured hundreds more.

Three followers of Abdel-Rahman and a fourth man were convicted in the trade center bombing last year and were sentenced to life in prison without parole.

Prosecutors said the motive was to punish the United States for supporting Israel.

The judge in the first trial said the bomb was meant to topple the 110-story towers, a symbol of America's economic might, and kill tens of thousands of people.

One defendant in the current trial, El Sayyid Nosair, an Egyptian, was acquitted in the 1990 assassination of Kahane. He was convicted on related weapons charges.

Four months after the trade center bombing, the FBI raided a safehouse in Queens where five defendants now on trial allegedly were mixing explosives to blow up the United Nations, two tunnels connecting Manhattan and New Jersey and FBI headquarters in New York.

They also allegedly plotted to assassinate Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and kidnap former US President Richard Nixon and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger.

Most of the proof to be offered by prosecutors about the plots consists of transcripts of secretly taped conversations between defendants and a former

Egyptian Army officer who became an FBI informant and infiltrated the group.

The informant, Emad Salem, is expected to testify but will face intense scrutiny by defense lawyers who have transcripts of his conversations with FBI agents as he negotiated his million-dollar fee.

Some defense lawyers say their clients were entrapped by Salem while others say their clients had no knowledge of the plots.

In one transcript, one defendant can be heard imagining the mayhem that would result with three Manhattan bombings in a 10-minute span.

"Boom! What the heck. That's it. This will drive the whole world crazy! This will make all America on stand by," he says, according to the transcripts.

Russian forces prepare for 'final assault' on Grozny

MAXIM KORZHOV
GROZNY

RUSSIAN artillery lobbed shells onto Chechen positions in a thick fog yesterday, while commanders reportedly prepared the "final storming" of the devastated Chechen capital.

The Russians also concentrated on Argun and Gudermes, towns east of Grozny that have tenaciously refused to buckle after more than a month of Russian attacks.

Chechen and Russian forces remain divided along Grozny's Sunzha River, which snakes through the center of the city. The Russians control the northern and western parts of the city, and have been heavily shelling the southern areas in recent days. The Russian guns were mostly silent early yesterday, sporadically firing on the Chechens.

"This morning it's quiet in the city," said Galina Malvinova, 65, who was fleeing Grozny after spending a month in a basement in the city center. "They are shelling and firing only near Minutka Square."

The area around the square has seen some of the heaviest bombardment in the war, which began Dec. 11 when Russia sent thousands of troops into the separatist republic to crush its drive for independence.

The number of checkpoints between Grozny and the neighboring "republic" of Ingushetia has doubled in recent days. Russian artillery and aerial attacks

have destroyed a number of bridges leading into the city.

In Moscow, the Russian government press service said that Moscow's forces were preparing for the final attack on Grozny.

"Over the past 24 hours units of the unified group of Russian troops in Chechnya carried out preparations for the final stage of activities in Grozny," said a government statement. The ITAR-Tass news agency said it would be the "final storming" of the capital.

Russian authorities have repeatedly announced plans to seize the city, but have been unable to oust forces loyal to Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev.

A five-member European delegation that just returned to Moscow from Chechnya lamented the destruction and called for international humanitarian support.

"We saw an enormous amount of devastation," said British diplomat Audrey Glover, director of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's human rights office. "It was like pictures I've seen of the bombing of Dresden."

Glover and her colleagues arrived Friday in Moscow, just outside Chechnya, where they interviewed Chechen prisoners and Russian soldiers and visited the Russian army headquarters there. They then went to Chechnya



A Russian mobile artillery unit prepares to bombard Grozny.

(Reuters)

on Saturday to meet with leaders of Chechnya's anti-Dudayev opposition. On Sunday, the group traveled to Grozny in armored personal carriers, where it met

with more Russian troops. The observers did not meet with Dudayev's representatives. Chechens yesterday expressed disappointment that they had no

chance to meet with the delegation. "In Grozny, 'street after street, blocks of flats were just totally destroyed,'" Glover said.

The delegates said they would call for an immediate humanitarian cease-fire, to let refugees flee. "The whole world has to help," Glover said. (AP)

Far East ushers in Year of the Pig

HONG KONG (AP) — In a riot of color, feasting and noise, hundreds of millions of people across Asia began to celebrate the Chinese New Year yesterday, bidding farewell to the Year of the Dog and hoping for good luck in the Year of the Pig.

With family reunions, firecrackers, decorated trees and gifts, the celebrations are the year's most important for Asians, akin to rolling Christmas, the Fourth of July and New Year into one.

The lunar new year or "Spring Festival" takes ultra-modern cities like Hong Kong and Singapore back to ancient roots. It's a time to turn over a new leaf, clear debts and clean the house — resulting in piles of discarded junk cluttering sidewalks.

Buildings and office blocks were ablaze with banners, placards, lanterns and lights depicting good-luck symbols like plum blossoms, fish and gold coins. People wished each other "kung hei fat choi" — congratulations and prosperity.

In Singapore, a 12-meter-high mechanized statue of a goddess sprinkled onlookers from an urn of "holy water" symbolizing blessings.

The Chinese lunar year is represented by one of 12 zodiacal animals. Today, the year of the Dog gives way to the year of the Pig, a favorite for Chinese who associate the animal with wealth and family. Anyone born in 1995, 1983, 1971, 1959, 1947, 1935, 1923, 1911 and 1899 qualifies as a Pig.

In China, hundreds of millions

clogged trains, planes and highways to get home for the holiday. About one-third of Hong Kong's 6 million people were expected to leave the British colony, mostly to neighboring China to holiday and visit family.

New Year's eve passed without the traditional appearance of paramount leader Deng Xiaoping, who at 90 is reported to be in ill health.

The holiday also spills into non-Chinese countries like Vietnam, where New Year is called Tet, and South Korea, where it's called Sol.

Transport officials estimated that more than half of South Korea's 44 million people would travel home to celebrate. Traveling time from Seoul to most cities doubled or tripled in the holiday crush.

But normally congested streets in Taiwan's capital, Taipei, were refreshingly traffic-free yesterday because many people started their holiday on the weekend.

At Wong Soh In's food store in Singapore, crowds lined up for four to five hours to buy fresh fishballs filled with minced pork and swallow-skin dumplings stuffed with minced fish.

"I have been eating them since I was a kid. We must have it," said Chin Hec Meng, who bought 40 fishballs.

Noisy street markets in Hong Kong were awash with last-minute shoppers purchasing food, sweet cakes and scrolls painted in red and gold by out-door calligraphers.

Holocaust-denying magazine forced to close

MIKE JACOBS and agencies
TOKYO

THE Japanese current affairs magazine *Marco Polo* is closing after international outrage over an article denying the Holocaust, the publisher announced yesterday.

"We deeply apologize for all the trouble caused by the article to the Jewish community and other related parties," said a spokesman for the giant Japanese publishing house Bungei Shunju, which owns the magazine.

The *Marco Polo* article claimed that the Holocaust was a "made-up story" because "the German government never once plotted or implemented the destruction of Jews."

Jewish groups and the Israel embassy led the furor over the article and Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, flew to Japan to protest to the publishers.

An Israeli diplomat, seething with anger, told *The Jerusalem Post* last week that he was "ready for war" after being stonewalled at an initial meeting with the editors of the magazine.

Marco Polo's editor, well-known journalist Kazuyoshi Hanada, originally defended the article and brushed aside Israeli and Jewish protests. But Bungei Shunju acted quickly after major international corpora-

tions including Volkswagen and Mitsubishi Motors announced they would cease advertising in the magazine.

"We regret that *Marco Polo* has printed an article about the Nazi slaughter of Jews that lacked accuracy and caused deep sadness and suffering to the Jewish community," said spokesman Tadashi Saito as the closure was announced.

Saito said company president Tanaka will formally apologize at a press conference Thursday in Tokyo with Cooper.

The Holocaust-denying story was particularly offensive because it was timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau being commemorated in Poland and Israel. Protesters called this a calculated insult to Holocaust victims and survivors and an attempt to pour scorn on the memorial events.

"This article is more than a cruel joke," Cooper had written earlier in a letter to Japan's ambassador to the United States.

"The Japanese government believes that the article in *Marco Polo* was extremely in-

considerate and highly inappropriate," Vice Foreign Minister Kunihiko Saito told reporters yesterday.

Publisher Bungei Shunju Ltd. said the 200,000-circulation monthly *Marco Polo* will stop publication immediately and remaining copies of the offending issue will be recalled.

The magazine said the gas chambers at Auschwitz, where an estimated 1.35 million Jews were killed, were communist fabrications and that some Jews died there only because of illness. It added that a gas chamber still on display in Auschwitz was built after World War II, either by Poland or the former Soviet Union.

The publication underscores startling ignorance among many Japanese. While comic books making wild claims about alleged Jewish conspiracies are common fare in Japan, this controversy was notable because of the prestige of Bungei Shunju, one of the nation's oldest magazine publishers.

The firm's flagship publication, also called *Bungei Shunju*, is widely read among Japan's political and bureaucratic elite. *Marco Polo*, a pet project of President Kengo Tanaka, was aimed at appealing to younger men who found *Bungei Shunju* too stodgy.

Clinton extends US ban on testing nuclear weapons

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — President Bill Clinton, aiming to improve the chances for extending the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, has decided to extend a moratorium on US nuclear tests beyond this year, National Security Adviser Anthony Lake said yesterday.

"The President has decided to extend the moratorium on its nuclear tests until a CTB (Comprehensive Test Ban) treaty enters into force," Lake said. The

moratorium runs out in September this year and Washington expects the CTB treaty to be signed before September 30, 1996.

In a speech to a non-proliferation conference, Lake also said Clinton had decided to drop a controversial US proposal that would allow member states an escape clause from the test ban treaty.

The United States and 168 other countries are currently ne-

gotiating an extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The United States and many other countries want the extension to be indefinite but non-aligned states are reluctant to commit themselves to foregoing nuclear weapons when the United States, Britain, Russia, France and China keep theirs.

At the same time the five nuclear powers are trying to negotiate a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty which the non-

aligned countries insist on. Clinton also has directed that "at tomorrow's session of the Geneva negotiations the US will withdraw its proposal for a special right to withdraw from the CTB treaty 10 years after it enters into force," Lake said.

He also wants the conference in Geneva on disarmament, which is negotiating the CTB, to remain in session through August. It is now scheduled to end in April.

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Admirable admission

IT is tempting to deride the government, as Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu did yesterday, for incompetence, indecision and insincerity in its handling of the stock market tax. It is a government whose prime minister at first solemnly promised that there would be no such tax as long as he served as premier: a government which then made a 180-degree turn and imposed a tax so convoluted that it proved not only grossly unfair but uncollectible.

Only diminishing popularity in opinion polls and complaints from big investors and speculators made it rescind its decision and cancel the tax altogether, cynically ignoring all the persuasive arguments it had made in its favor.

But there is something to be said for a government that confesses error and changes course when it realizes it has made one. After all, "we were wrong" are the most difficult words in public life. That the government has uttered them is a tribute to its courage and honesty. For this, it deserves nothing but the highest praise.

That Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin chose not to make Finance Minister Avraham Shohat a scapegoat by demanding his resignation is also commendable. The decision to impose the tax in its unacceptable form was Rabin's, and it is his duty, not Shohat's, to bear the brunt of the mistake. Nor will his decision reflect badly on his government. The public will undoubtedly remember this course-correction approvingly, and probably forget the zigzagging that preceded it.

There is no doubt, too, that the public will appreciate similar honesty in relation to what Shohat, in a heated exchange with Rabin on Sunday, termed the other government mistake — the Oslo agreement. True, the gravity and implications of the Oslo blunder are infinitely greater

than those of the bourse tax. But the process has not been dissimilar.

As in the case of the tax, Rabin made a decision on the Oslo negotiations which was diametrically opposed to his previous solemn pledges. (No one had been more adamant in opposing negotiations with Yasser Arafat and the PLO than Rabin himself.) And as in the case of the tax, he allowed himself to be persuaded by members of his government who painted a totally unrealistic picture of the decision's possible consequences. To his credit, in this case, too, he soon realized that he had lent himself to a fatally flawed move.

Now he must muster the kind of political courage that only few in Israel's history have shown. The Israel-PLO agreement has been hailed by the whole world as a giant step to peace. Because of it, Rabin, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Arafat have received the Nobel Peace Prize. Because of it, too, Arab regimes in North Africa and the Gulf have thawed their relations with Israel. The world community, expecting the agreement to bring about an Israeli withdrawal to the 1949 armistice lines and the creation of a Palestinian state, will view its abrogation censoriously.

But the people of Israel will be relieved by the government's admission that the agreement was a mistake and support efforts to reverse it. It was Rabin who said that the "Gaza and Jericho first" stage was a test, and that everything was reversible if the test failed.

Now is the time for him to focus his energies on persuading the world that the test's failure proves that the agreement is an invitation to war, not a path to peace, and that the international community must support Israel's search for a viable alternative.

Dreamers and realists

A DRAMATIC demonstration of the conflict between dreamers and realists in the government was provided by yesterday's *Ha'aretz*. An article by Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin afforded a revealing glimpse into the kind of Alice-in-Wonderland thinking that produced the Oslo agreement. With the fervor of a true believer, Beilin proposes that Israel respond to the post-Oslo wave of terrorism by skipping the interim period of the agreement and immediately moving to negotiations on the final status. If the agreement is in trouble, he avers, it is not the Palestinians' fault. He does not mention that they have violated every important provision in it, that they have refused to amend the PLO covenant that calls for Israel's destruction, and that the agreement has bred unprecedented violence.

If there are problems in implementing the agreement, it is the fault of previous governments, for allowing Hamas to rob the PLO of its monopoly as the sole representative of the Palestinian camp. It is also the fault of the public, for failing to remember that violence did not start with Oslo; that wars, terrorist gangs, massacres, riots, and hijacked buses riddled the country's history for a hundred years. (That the public may not suffer from a faulty memory but wonder why peace has brought a doubling and tripling of terrorism does not seem to occur to him.) And he also blames the opposition for doing whatever it can "to prevent an irreversible political solution" and the settlers for provoking the Palestinians.

But Beilin's central point is that terrorism merely endangers individuals, while war endangers the nation's existence. If peace is concluded with the Palestinians and Syria, this danger will be removed "for generations." In fact, "the era of war between us and our neighbors will end," he asserts.

That such a palpably ludicrous claim can be

made in the Middle East, where peace agreements have been violated, truncated, and discarded by virtually every nation, including Syria and the Palestinians, is mind boggling. One can only wonder if Beilin disavows the warning by his prime minister that Israel must prepare for a possible war in the middle and long range.

In contrast to this utopian view, an interview with Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur on the same page presents a realistic assessment of the state of the Oslo agreement. Beginning with a statement which asserts what Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has only implied, Gur says, "We are not going to the next stage. There will be no army redeployment and no withdrawal from the [Arab] town centers, if Yasser Arafat fails to fulfill the obligations he has undertaken in the Oslo agreement. It is unthinkable that we shall continue to fulfill our commitments while the security situation deteriorates and the PLO fails to prove its ability to overcome terrorism: not 100 percent, but 80 percent. For now, it is not overcoming anything."

But perhaps the most telling part of the Gur interview is its revelation of the Palestinian negotiators' mindset. "It is very unpleasant to hear what I hear from the Palestinians," he says. "They are not talking about the house in Hebron or the Tamar hill [near Efrat]. They are talking about University Hill in Tel Aviv, even every so often during the negotiations. In one of the meetings I said to their chief delegate, 'If I record this discussion and let members of my own party, not the opposition, listen to it, 90 percent would say: Stop the talks at once!'"

Gur still has hope, though obviously a very slim one, that some of the Oslo agreement can be salvaged. But one can only wonder how a government can accommodate both him and Beilin in policy-shaping capacities. Clearly, the time has come to decide which one of these lines the government will follow.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JUSTIFIED CYNICISM

Sir, — To understand why so many are cynical about the "peace" supposedly achieved with the Palestinians, one needs only look at the front page of the *Post* of January 2. Two headlines stand out: "Government likely to stop Efrat construction" and "PA refuses to hand over killers of Uri Megidish."

The PA has yet to remove the sections of the PLO charter calling for the destruction of Israel. The PA

has yet to apprehend and hand over a single terrorist to Israel (discounting, of course, the charade of "rounding up the usual suspects" staged in Gaza). The PA continually violates the provisions of the Oslo and Cairo accords regarding activities in Jerusalem. But it is the expansion of Efrat which they claim threatens the "peace" process.

MICHAEL HIRSCH

Kochav Yair.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Sir, — I read with keen interest "Higher education hits the marketplace" by Herb Keinson (January 20) concerning the growth of independent colleges in Israel.

A complaint I hear repeatedly from parents and teachers of the Christian religion in private and public schools in the Arab sector is the poor quality of Christian education for the Christian minority (161,000) in Israel. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that there is no

accredited institution for the training of Christian teachers, either Arab or expatriate, in this country.

I hope that the new policy for "the encouragement of higher education institutions that are not universities" will be a step to remedy this problem.

DR. RAY REGISTER,
Director, Israel Branch
International Institute
of Biblical Studies

Kafr Yasif.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Sir, — Kudos to Eli Wohlger for his concern for Holocaust survivors, and his questioning of Shohat priorities (January 22).

As director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's "They Chose Life" project, documenting the achievements of survivors since the war, I have the opportunity to meet many victims of the Shoah. While a great number of them have achieved fantastic success in all walks of life, a greater number struggles daily to overcome the physical, emotional and psychological effects of the war against them.

If the Nazis tried to eradicate people, it seems only right that we should be concerned, as a primary obligation, with providing ongoing service and support to those brave people who survived.

RABBI STEWART WEISS,
Director, "They Chose Life"
Simon Wiesenthal Center
(Headquarters Los Angeles)
Jerusalem.



Good faith in question

YEHUDA Z. BLUM

EVER since the signing of the Israel-PLO Declaration of Principles in September 1993, there has been a constantly emerging pattern of the PLO systematically eroding its undertakings and getting away with it, owing to the evident unwillingness of the government "to endanger the peace process."

Two recent episodes, seemingly not of major importance, serve to illustrate this phenomenon and clearly highlight a broader pattern.

Some months ago, Israel requested that the Palestinian Authority transfer to it two residents of Gaza, the cousins Rajah and Amru Abu Sita, wanted for the March 1993 murder of Uri Megidish of Gan Or in the Gaza Strip.

Israel's request was based on Article II (7) of the protocol concerning legal matters, signed concurrently with the Cairo agreement on May 4, 1994. Under that provision, "where an individual suspected of, charged with or convicted of an offense that falls within Israeli criminal jurisdiction is present in... [Gaza-Jericho], Israel may request the Palestinian Authority to arrest and transfer the individual to Israel."

What makes this case particularly grave is that the two persons wanted for murder have, in the meantime, become "policemen."

After considerable delay, in December the PA advised Israel of its rejection of the request on the grounds that the said provision applies only to offenses committed after the signing of the Cairo agreement.

This interpretation is completely unfounded to the point

that the good faith of its protagonists must be questioned.

The principle of non-retroactivity of crimes is based on the commendable premise that a person should not be punished for an act that was not considered an offense at the time of its commission.

However, extradition provisions do not create new offenses.

Arafat sees commitments as something to be shunted aside

They are procedural in nature, to enable the punishment of acts — both past and future — considered crimes under substantive law.

Therefore, extradition treaties are always construed, unless explicitly stated otherwise, as having retroactive application.

Not surprisingly, all Israeli legal authorities consulted (in the Ministry of Justice, the Foreign Ministry and the Prime Minister's Office) have unanimously rejected the PA's disingenuous interpretation. The prime minister would do well to heed their advice, despite his well-publicized contempt for the Israeli legal establishment.

IN A separate and little-noticed matter, Yasser Arafat recently announced the establishment of a Palestinian Religious Appeals Court in Jerusalem, to be headed

by Sheikh Hamad Bitami, head of the recently outlawed "Palestinian Council of Sages." Hamas's highest religious authority.

Pending its installation in a suitable location in Jerusalem, the court, we are told, plans to hold its sessions in Nabulus.

Here again, we face a blatant violation (and a double violation, at that) of the Israel-PLO agreements. The PA at this time has no jurisdiction outside Gaza-Jericho, except in some specific spheres of "early empowerment," namely, education, health, social welfare, tourism and taxation. Justice and religious affairs are not included.

Moreover, the PA has no jurisdiction of any kind in Jerusalem. Since Israel acquiesced last summer in the appointment by Hassan Tabboub, head of the PA's department for Waqf affairs, of a mufti in Jerusalem (to counter the Jordanian-appointed mufti), the PA was apparently led to believe that it could further proceed with its illegal activities.

This is how Arafat creates facts in Jerusalem, in violation of his undertakings, while the government keeps silent "for the sake of peace."

It is high time for the government to activate the law adopted by the Knesset last month which prohibits any political or governmental activity by the PLO or PA outside Gaza-Jericho, if such activity is incompatible with Israel's sovereignty.

The writer, a former ambassador to the UN, holds the Hersch Lauterpacht chair in international law at the Hebrew University.

The long road to Damascus

ROGER M. KAYE

I have a mission, but President Assad won't let me carry it out. I have to visit the Great Mosque of Damascus.

Osman claimed Istanbul's Blue Mosque was the biggest, most beautiful, greatest mosque in the world. Ahmed scoffed; the Great Mosque in Damascus was infinitely superior, he said.

I couldn't help. I was standing with the Turk and the Syrian under the dome of the Blue Mosque, but I had never been to Damascus. Ahmed's solution was simple: I must come to Damascus and see the mosque for myself. I would be an honored guest in his house. He would show me around.

That was in 1962. I am still waiting to make the trip, to see if Ahmed is as hospitable now as he sounded then. But I don't see any sign that his president is willing to receive me.

There are so many little things Assad could do to show he is interested in a peace of the brave, and not just a piece of land. King Hussein has shown us what can be achieved by intelligent dialogue between two reasonable people.

Time is running out for both sides. The gathering forces of fundamentalism aren't interested in Israeli tourists, joint business projects, more efficient use of common water resources, or any of the other fruits of peace. I doubt they are interested in my checking out any of their mosques, or that they want to see an international ski site reaching to the very top of Mount Hermon.

I AM not at all sure that the fundamentalists are interested in the continuation of Assad's re-

gime. So what's the president waiting for? Perhaps, from the depths of his uncomfortable-looking armchair, he doesn't see what's happening in the region. Perhaps he hasn't visited the Blue Mosque in Istanbul lately.

I did, last year — and the reception wasn't friendly. The modern, European-style Turks of 1962 were long gone: the present wor-

I have a mission, but Hafez Assad won't let me carry it out

shippers looked closer to Teheran than Paris, and they weren't happy to see tourists in their mosque.

Assad should look around. Even his poorest peasants can now see the world, thanks to satellite television. They can see what the West offers its citizens, and compare their miserable conditions to the luxury and affluence on their TV screens.

And what do they do? They know they have no hope of improving their lot, and give up without a struggle. The fundamentalists promise them rewards in the world to come, so why bother to work for no gain in this one?

The only hope for our region is peace, and its enormous economic benefits. Only peace can restore people's belief in this world.

Assad has called peace his strategic option, and said that Syria is committed to the peace process.

But first he has to convince me, the Israeli voter, who in two short years is going to put a stop to the

whole process unless I am satisfied it is going to bring me real peace.

Is this what Assad wants? International investment will never arrive. American aid will never arrive. Neither will planeloads of tourists on the Syria-Israel-Jordan-Egypt package. The Syrian economy will falter, and there's no Soviet Union to bail it out.

Islamic fundamentalism thrives among poor, hungry, frustrated people. Syria could easily follow Iran, Algeria, and possibly even Turkey, down the road to social and economic chaos.

But what does this democratic Israeli, clutching his precious vote, see? I see an old and sick-looking man stubbornly repeating the same, threadbare lines. I see him still using terror and mayhem as an instrument of political persuasion.

I see not one ounce of understanding of our pain over our missing soldiers. I see no recognition of any responsibility for his loss of the Golan. I see an unwillingness to take even one step in our direction.

Hamas and the Islamic Jihad continue to kill us, the Hizbullah continues to threaten our northern border, and our MIAs are still missing. Assad really must decide: Is he going to play games, or make the sort of gesture I can understand?

Assad must talk to me, now. In two years I'll still be here. I'm not so sure about Rabin. In fact, I'm not that certain about Assad.

I've been a long time on the road to Damascus. How long will Assad be on the road to Jerusalem?

The writer is a freelance journalist who lives in Rehovot.

Ron's mate

ELEANOR CLIFT

NANCY Reagan finished second from the bottom in a recent poll of historians asked to rank first ladies. Only Mary Lincoln, who held séances in the Red Room and once bought 300 pairs of gloves in four months, fared worse. Nancy's fondness for designer dresses and fine china while ketchup was being declared a vegetable for schoolchildren made her easy to caricature.

She became a symbol of the uncaring rich, a Barbie doll with an attitude. She was perceived as a drag on her husband's presidency. But the real Nancy was a far more effective first lady than her public image implied.

The key to a first lady's effectiveness is not whether people like you, but whether you help the president. By that measure, Nancy was a success.

Indeed, it can be argued that she had more positive impact on substantive issues than Barbara Bush or Hillary Rodham Clinton.

There is no evidence that Barbara used her popularity toward any particular end; and Hillary's unleashing of first-lady power with a tide and an office backfired in the failed health-care reform effort.

Nancy wasn't popular and she operated under cover, usually through a surrogate. Her sole motive was to protect her husband.

Nancy Reagan was a far more effective first lady than her public image implied

hand, and she thought the best way to do that was to keep his presidency from being captured by the far right. Her instinct for moderation drew her into debates over everything from social policy to US-Soviet relations.

Nancy knew how to play internal politics. She didn't just rely on pillow talk. When she had a pet project, or she wanted someone fired, she would build a coalition to promote her position independently, relying on allies inside and outside the administration.

She never left fingerprints. But when an anti-abortion passage disappeared from a presidential speech, aides assumed it was Nancy's doing.

AFTER REAGAN was shot, he became convinced he had been saved for some larger purpose. Still in the hospital, he wrote a long, personal letter to then-Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. The administration's Soviet experts thought it was naive and rewrote it, but in the end — with help from Nancy and aide Michael Deaver — Reagan's original longhand version went to Brezhnev. Nancy came to believe that ending the Cold War was Reagan's destiny.

Nancy played up Reagan's strengths and covered for his weaknesses. The bond Reagan ultimately forged with Mikhail Gorbachev changed the course of the superpower relationship.

Nancy protected her husband against people she thought wanted to use him for personal or ideological reasons. "He is what he is largely because of her," says Edmund Morris, Reagan's official biographer. "He had presidential qualities, but she supplied an element that was missing: the strong woman who acts as a screen between him and the predatory outside."

Nancy has mellowed since leaving the White House. After years of stubborn estrangement, she and her daughter, Patti Davis, are finding common ground.

When Davis called to tell her she had posed nude with *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner's dog as part of an anti-fur campaign, Nancy was almost blasé. She said she hadn't bought a new fur coat for 15 years, and didn't sound like she was in the market for another one. "That's progress," says Davis.

Reagan's poignant revelation that he has Alzheimer's disease bore Nancy's imprint. The letter, written in Reagan's cramped handwriting, is very much his own.

But friends say it was Nancy who confronted the challenge of making the news public. She didn't want to make excuses for her husband any more. It was a public-relations gesture in the best sense.

(Washington Post)

Tarantino plays 'Pulp' deejay

NEW RELEASES

IRAZAH AGASSI

PULP Fiction is the movie of the moment. Quentin Tarantino's bizarrely jolly loop of violent vignettes about camaraderie and honor among thugs is a perverse, picaresque romp that metamorphoses into a tale of redemption.

Moviegoers apparently can't get enough of it; many are taking its goofy operatic spirit home with them in the form of its energetic soundtrack: *Music From the Motion Picture Pulp Fiction* (Hed Arzi).

In *Truth and Fiction*, a promotional disc in which Tarantino discusses the music and the making of the film, he explains that his first task, when conceptualizing a film, is to go through his own record collection to "find the spirit of the movie."

The blaring, twanging guitars and corny horns of "Misirlou" introduces the movie's opening credits. According to Tarantino, the opening credits set a movie's tone. For him, finding the music for the credits is a vital trigger into the "personality and rhythm of the piece." In choosing "Misirlou," he says, he "throws down a gauntlet" stating that "this is an epic... We're BIG... a rock 'n' roll spaghetti western."

On the album, the track is quickly followed by "Royale With Cheese," the film's marvelous opening dialogue in which two gangsters (John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson) drive to a "hit," discussing the little differences between life in Europe and America in terms of fast-food restaurants. It's a better-sketched zap of insane good humor in the midst of murderous times.

Though the movie's ironic perspective is always tightly controlled, it does not lack soul. Thus, a nasty tirade from a big boss to a boxer on why he is a loser who might as well sell his soul is matched punch for punch by the melting romance of Al Green's "Let's Stay Together."

The boxer's paramour may be a ditzy child bride, and his father's honorable heirloom — a wristwatch passed from genera-

tion to generation of war heroes — may have made it out of Vietnam stashed up an honorable anus, but hey, a man's gotta do what a man's gotta do. *Pulp Fiction* is exuberantly irreverent. But then again, it's not. For the soundtrack that sets its tone is often more than sincere.

THE BIG find was Dusty Springfield's "Son of a Preacher Man." Tarantino explains that he had had the idea for this sequence of "a guy going to a house to pick up a date" for six or seven years before he found the movie in which to include it. In this case, the guy, Travolta, is already looped on heroin, shot up to the surfing sounds of "Bullwinkle Part 2," and the girl, Uma Thurman, is busily "powdering her nose" with cocaine. But so what? Feelings are still feelings.

And this rendition by Springfield is a paradise of feelings. Her vocal is the ultimate role model for any white singer who loves soul music but wants to avoid the trap of trying too hard. Her tender voice stays true to her lily-white genes as it two steps with the R&B "ooh-oohs" and horns.

The song, like the movie, is effortlessly integrated. Black and white have nothing whatsoever to do with whose side anybody's on. Every song on the soundtrack, from Urge Overkill's "Girl, You'll Be a Woman Soon" to the Statler Brothers' "Flowers On the Wall" is obviously meticulously chosen.

Getting to listen to classics like Chuck Berry's "You Never Can Tell" at your leisure is a pleasure. And the seven dialogue clips are sufficiently to the point to avoid pomposity.

THERE IS, however, one glaring discrepancy between the film and the album: Its paring shot. Let's just say that the biblical quote from Ezekiel 25:17 can be interpreted as a psychopathic joke — as it is, at the film's beginning and, inexplicably, on the album's last cut. Or it can be taken



Tarantino, here holding his Golden Globe for best screenplay, culled the sound track from his own collection. (AP)

straight: God is right here for everyone! I found the gunshots with which the album ends to be quite disappointing. But then again, perhaps this can be taken as an

invitation to the listener to catch the soundtrack's energetic wave and surf on out into their very own "moment of clarity," finding a personalized pathway to salvation.

Bond, minus bimbos

PAUL MAJENDE
LEAVESDEN, ENGLAND

JAMES Bond, the world's most famous spy, has a new look for the Nineties. Gone are the bikini-clad starlets; in comes a hero more in tune with feminists.

Bond, played for the first time by Irishman Pierce Brosnan, even has a woman boss in *Goldeneye*. Dame Judi Dench takes over the role of "M" and dares to call the suave hero a misogynist dinosaur.

"We don't have any bikini-clad girls draped round swimming pools or hanging from chandeliers," the film's director, Martin Campbell, said on the set, a disused Rolls-Royce aircraft hangar north of London.

"I think his attitudes are very 'Nineties.' There is no bimbo element in it at all. He certainly was sexist in past films. He is less so in this one," said Campbell.

Brosnan, launching into one of the most famous roles in the cinema for Bond thriller No. 17, agreed.

"The heroines are different," he said. "They have more substance. The women have voices."

"There are some very good lines with the Bond girls — Oops, I am sorry — I mean the Bond women."

Dutch actress Famke Janssen fitted the mold perfectly as a new Bond heroine.

"This is not anybody's bimbo. I try to bring my intelligence to the part. But they are always going to be objects of desire," she said. Corpulent comedian Robbie Coltrane, who plays a Russian villain, complained: "At the age of 44 and being somewhat overweight, I think my chances of playing a Bond girl were slim. But I can assure you Brosnan is the perfect gentleman in the shower scenes."

For 41-year-old Brosnan, Sean Connery was the quintessential Bond, though he paid warm tribute to Roger Moore for injecting so much humor into the films, which have now been seen by 2.5 billion people around the world. Brosnan admitted to being ner-

vous as he sought "how to breathe life into what has become a period piece."

Goldeneye, a \$50-million production that promises to be as action-packed as the other Bond films, is being shot over 18 weeks in Britain and on location in Puerto Rico, Switzerland, the French Riviera and Russia.

The British set was dotted with Russian T-55 tanks and mock-ups of MiG-29 jets. Bodies lay draped round the wreck of an Arctic underground bunker, waiting for a jet to crash spectacularly through the roof.

But gone are the Cold War villains of the past. This time Bond has to grapple with organized crime, and Russia is the epicenter of a new European mafia.

Bond, the epitome of English elegance, also has some distinctly European touches added to him and his beloved gadgets. He will be driving a German sports car, sporting Italian suits and wearing a Swiss watch.

But Brosnan assured reporters that both his shoes and underwear are made in Britain. (Reuters)

Zori: Fiddler on the route

MICHAEL AJZENSTADT

Nitai Zori has moved from the country into town — musically speaking.

After five years as concertmaster of the Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra, the 29-year-old violinist now holds the same position with the Ra'anana Symphonette Orchestra.

"After five years with one orchestra I wanted to smell some new aromas. The time had come to search for an orchestra which was more symphonic in nature," he says.

Being a concertmaster, says Zori, is a "larger-than-life job. It is a world of its own that features not only playing but also leadership."

The Symphonette is an orchestra comprised mainly of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Zori didn't find this a major change.

"In the Kibbutz orchestra there are more than a few immigrants as well. They are great musicians and wonderful people," he says.

In contrast with the Kibbutz orchestra, the Symphonette has its

own concert hall and a warm local following. "It really is a great audience, which is very supportive," says Zori. "You feel that there is a joie de vivre and real happiness in our audience."

One of the major bonuses of being a concertmaster is the opportunity to solo with the orchestra.

Zori is about to make his first major solo appearance in a subscription series, playing the violin part in Dov Seltzer's *Siempenu*, a Jewish drama for narrator, violin and orchestra, based on Hassidic melodies.

Siempenu, he notes, "has its beautiful aspects as well as its kitschy ones. It is simply a question of the right dosage. If you don't put in too much schmaltz it works beautifully."

Zori comes from a very musical family. His parents, both of whom are teachers, have four children, all musicians. And while violinist Carmi lives in the US, the other three — pianist

Ruth, cellist Hillel and Nitai — all live and work here and continually search for opportunities to play together.

Being a son of schoolteachers makes Zori an ideal candidate to play in front of young audiences.

Both the Kibbutz Chamber Orchestra and the Ra'anana Symphonette play a lot of concerts for children.

"I look on these concerts as a sacred mission," he says. "There is also the sports-like element to it, which means that you have to face several kinds of situations and emerge a winner."

The Ra'anana Symphonette Orchestra plays *Siempenu* with narrator Shmuel Segal and Zori, under the baton of music director Yehoram Scharovsky. The other works on the program are also based on Jewish themes.

Concert dates are February 6, 8, 9, 11 in Ra'anana, February 12 in Netanya and February 14 at the Tel Aviv Museum. In a special matinee concert, February 10 in Ra'anana, Segal will narrate *Siempenu* in Yiddish.

He puts himself on the same level as his musicians

AT first sight, the IPO program under Russian conductor Gennadi Rozhdestvensky — with two early Haydn compositions, and works by Schnittke, Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev — seemed a random selection. Closer scrutiny revealed a masterpiece of programming.

The two Haydn pieces, the Symphony No. 30 and the concerto for violin, keyboard (probably intended for harpsichord) and strings, had naive as their common denominator. The concerto is still more a concerto grosso than a true solo. This style connected us to the next item, Schnittke's Concerto Grosso No. 6, also for violin, piano and strings, composed in 1993 and re-viving, together with all his other concert grossi, the old baroque form.

With Schnittke we entered the domain of Russian music. But the three pieces in this second section of the concert, Schnittke, Tchaikovsky's symphonic poem *Faun* and the last piece on the program, Prokofiev's *Scythian Suite*, had much more in common than just being Russian.

The works by Schnittke and Prokofiev are both 20th-century compositions and those by Tchaikovsky and Prokofiev are both early, immature compositions.

Tchaikovsky wrote *Faun* in 1868 when he was 28. Prokofiev's dissonant *Scythian Suite* shocked the music world in St. Petersburg in 1916, when he was 24. The

element of immaturity in these works connected them with Haydn.

The two soloists, violinist Alexandre Rojdestvenski and the pianist, Viktoria Postnikova, were a delight. The orchestra was also excellent, following Rozhdestvensky's instructions meticulously.

Rozhdestvensky hardly moves his arms and he conducts from the floor and not from the podium, establishing a very close relationship with the musicians.

Mann Auditorium, Tel Aviv, January 22. Benjamin Bar-Am

BY inviting Yan Pascal Tortelier to conduct, the Israel Chamber Orchestra brought calamity upon itself, and by presenting mezzo Dalia Schachter in a program of Mozart arias the orchestra created one of the most ridiculous musical events this critic has ever attended.

Tortelier seems able to conduct only because he shares the name of his illustrious father. This concert showed that he only swings his arms but does not really conduct.

He has neither conception, style nor a message and he is incapable of even rehearsing the music properly. The playing was untidy from the beginning.

Even the four excellent soloists in Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante in E flat major, for oboe, clarinet, bassoon and horn, K.297,

CONCERT ROUNDUP

were unable to assert themselves. The cause of this mediocrity was undoubtedly the conductor, who established no rapport or communication with the musicians. The same must be said about the performance of Symphony No. 39 in E flat; wrong tempi, sluggish phrasing and no musical message.

Dalia Schachter's rendition of four Mozart arias was for the most part off tune with more wrong notes than right ones. In contrast with the praise of the program notes, the reality on stage was a disaster. Besides singing lessons, Schachter should be taught how to behave on stage. All in all, a painfully missed opportunity.

Tel Aviv Performing Arts Center, January 23. Benjamin Bar-Am

THE Israel Philharmonic went Slavic in its Subscription Concert No. 4, conducted by Gennadi Rozhdestvensky, with works by Dvorak, Shostakovich and Jan Freidlin — a new immigrant who came from Russia five years ago. Freidlin's Concerto for cello, vibraphone and strings (1994), in its world premiere, sounds unexpectedly Romantic. The cello sings lyrically most of the time, though in unpredictable melodic lines, while the strings provide a mostly soothing background.

Celloist Michael Haran re-

dered the solo part with devotion and a capacity to sing with his instrument. Ayal Rafiah played the vibraphone with noteworthy dexterity and sense of balance.

Rozhdestvensky held the IPO in a firm grip, making a veritable orchestral celebration out of Dvorak's rather stereotyped "My Home" Overture, in its first IPO performance, and of Shostakovich's boisterous Leningrad Symphony.

It would honor Shostakovich if the IPO forgot that he ever wrote this inflated made-to-order showpiece.

Jerusalem International Convention Center, January 26. Ury Epstein

FOR Ingrid Haebler, only Mozart seemed to exist when she played his Piano Concerto K.453, in the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra's Subscription Concert No. 4, conducted by Yoav Talmi. An easy, natural flow of the music, and a delicate, light touch brought Mozart to life. Her subtle art represents the great European tradition of music at its best.

There was much excitement and enthusiasm but little style in the performance of Bruckner's Symphony No. 4. Solo episodes and calm passages were rendered sensitively, only to be swept away by muddy and clamorous orchestral tutti. Loud outbursts substituted for climactic releases of energies because the preparatory build-up of tension was missing.

Everybody in the orchestra seemed to be working hard — and that's just how it sounded.

Jerusalem Theater, January 25. Ury Epstein

IT'S a pity that the Young Philharmonic Orchestra doesn't get more chances to perform in public. This energetic ensemble is a solid musical body with lots of temperament, drive and vivacity not always found in a regular orchestra.

Menahem Nebenzahl led the orchestra in an impressive reading of Brahms's Fourth Symphony. It was a dramatic yet elegant rendition of one of the symphonic masterpieces in the repertoire. Even if occasionally the horns were not at their very best, or the winds lacked sensitivity and refinement, the overall impression is that this orchestra is a treasure.

In Beethoven's rarely heard Triple Concerto, the three young soloists, pianist Irit Friedland, cellist Konstantin Sokolov and, above all, violinist Jonathan Gandelman acquitted themselves well.

The concert opened with a solid reading of Oded Zehavi's *Pink Dust*, which sounded more in its natural element when performed by a full symphony orchestra than when first played by the much smaller Israel Chamber Orchestra.

Noga Theater, Jaffa, January 26. Michael Ajzenstadt

Commedia del'arte cum stand-up comedy

THEATER REVIEW

NAOMI DOUDAI

THE SCAMS OF SCAPIN (Les Fourberies de Scapin)

After Molière, Hebrew version. Oren Neeman and Roni Pinkovitch. Direction, Roni Pinkovitch. Set, Eitan Levi. Costumes, Iris Ratinsky. Music Boaz Barkat. Movement, Uzi Marín. At the Meislin Hall, Habimah National Theater. Hebrew title, *Te'ahdel Scapin*. Argente Hana Goldblatt Geronte Ezra Dagan Octave Roy Sasson Leandre Lior Ashkenazi Zerbinette Sarit Winograd Hyciente Yuli Hargil Scapin Yossi Toledo.

THE ultimate in scams this certainly is. Doubly perpetrated on a long-deceased — hence defenseless — giant of theater and an unsuspecting contemporary audience, it oversteps the bounds of good taste as well as the limits of *lèse majesté*.

An ear-splitting, eye-boggling, onslaught of disco-style din, shrouded in smoke, spiked with break dancing, and set to punk Blues, it displays all the symptoms of a sick teenage subculture at its crudest. Molière-a-la-eastern Mediterranean, if to glorify the vulgar, half-baked menu with

the name of its alleged author. And with no fear of copyright infringement.

A totally untalented high-school frolic, it may titillate mindless teenagers, but will do nil towards turning their betters into faithful followers of serious theater — in case that was what Habimah had in mind. How on earth did such an antieducational artifact ever find its way into the repertoire of our national theater?

In this director's "concept," stand-up comedy becomes a substitute for commedia del'arte. Scapin is no wise, witty or wily rogue a la Jean-Louis Barrault, but an outright exhibitionist, more spastic than elastic. He monopolizes the maximum of attention with a tireless — at times tiring — display of run-of-the-day mime and circus routines.

With the exception of Zerbinette, ravishingly rocked-up by Sarit Winograd, and a strangely moving deaf-mute played by an unnamed actor, the roles are frantically farcified by a mixed cast of veteran and newly arrived actors.

The director's restraining hand is nowhere in evidence.

Bat-Dor choreographer goes out of Africa — and into Asia

DANCE

DORA SOWDEN

THE Bat-Dor Dance Company notched up another achievement with the program it staged at the Noga Theater in Tel Aviv-Jaffa (January 24), including two outstanding premieres.

Mauricio Wainrot is an internationally known choreographer and has been here before. So it was no surprise that his *Tam-Bu-Le* ("Pieces of Africa") showed every sign of his expertise.

In fact, it was almost too slick and smooth — at times more cabaret than ethnic and always more Asian than African in its echoes.

Even the drones and decibels of the music by Justinian Tamassuza and Hanza El Din encouraged that impression.

The bright mood and the lighting suggested a land where it was always afternoon. The nine dancers, all in sunny white, moved with a charm that held its sway throughout as they slid from one

proud pattern to another.

The surprise item was Ora Dror's *On the Brink*, her second work for the company, which demonstrated her versatility.

Six dancers threaded their way through a multitude of movements and episodes until they reached a peak of performance in a quartet involving four chairs.

It was so brilliant that when it ended the work seemed too short, even though it dissolved into a reflective conclusion.

A repeat of Hans Van Manen's *In and Out*, to start off the essentially patrician program, was a clever choice. Firstly, this masterpiece gave the women a chance to show their elegance in toe shoes.

Secondly, its structure set a

standard for the works that followed — and measured the high level of their success. The sexy

voice in which the English text was spoken was irritating, and the men slouched as they entered the stage.

But ultimately the way the women finally failed to get the men remained humorous.

TOWER RECORDS' TOP 15

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEKS ON CHARTS	ARTIST	TITLE
#1	1	FILM SOUND TRACK	PULP FICTION
#2	2	CRANBERRIES	NO NEED TO ARGUE
#3	3	VARIOUS ARTISTS	HIT LIST 3
#4	4	MASHINA	SO LONG, KIDS
#5	5	SHALOM HANOCH	VIOLENCE
#6	6	NATASHA'S FRIENDS	RADIO BLAH BLAH
#7	7	BON JOVI	CROSSROADS
#8	8	SADE	BEST OF
#9	9	STING	FIELDS OF GOLD
#10	10	BACH ET LAFRICA	LAMBARINA
#11	11	FILM SOUND TRACK	LION KING
#12	12	FILM SOUND TRACK	1492
#13	13	RITA	THE GRAND LOVE
#14	14	YEHUDIT RAVITZ	COLLECTION
#15	15	LUCIANO PAVAROTTI	PAVAROTTI & FRIENDS

*Tower Records' top-selling albums for the previous week. RE — re-entry

A SUMPTUOUS FEAST!



Table Manna

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 1995

Africa Israel Inv. plans to build 5,000 rental units

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

AFRICA Israel Investments plans to head a consortium of investors to construct between 3,000 and 5,000 housing units for rent during the next two years, managing director Shlomo Grofman said yesterday.

Grofman said foreign companies, provident funds and insurance companies - including Migdal, a subsidiary of Africa Israel - have already expressed interest in taking part in the consortium.

The consortium plans to invest about \$500,000 million in the project. Grofman said implementation of the plan is subject to amendments to the encouragement of construction for rent law so contractors can receive additional incentives.

Africa Israel plans to submit to the Housing Ministry proposed changes to the law, including a

suggestion to extend the maximum rent period from five years to 10, or even 20, years.

Grofman said he has already consulted Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Finance Minister Avraham Shohat about his plans.

Grofman said it is absolutely necessary to build housing units for rent, mainly due to the housing problems of young couples and immigrants.

"The reality today is that young people leave their parents home at an earlier age, and there are more divorcees and single parent families," said Grofman.

He also said he does not predict a real rise in apartment prices this year.

Africa Israel sold 1,016 apartments last year, 14% more than the 890 sold in 1993.



Grofman: Several firms have already expressed interest in taking part in the consortium for building the rental units.

Akirov exercises options on El-Rov's shares for NIS 24.2m.

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

BUSINESSMAN Alfred Akirov, a major shareholder in El-Rov (Israel), yesterday exercised options on the company's shares for NIS 24.2 million.

The options were exercised at 14 percent above the price of the company's shares on the stock exchange.

The exercise of the options has increased El-Rov's shareholders' equity to about NIS 156m.

Yesterday was the last trading day for El-Rov's options. Out of a series of 2,752,000 options, Akirov exercised 1,558,950 warrants at an exercise price of NIS 15.52 per option.

El-Rov Property, a subsidiary of El-Rov, exercised about 890,000 warrants at NIS 13.8 per option.

"Exercising the options presents an excellent investment for me," Akirov said. "Based on the exercise price, the company is valued at \$60m. after the options are exercised. In my opinion, the company's economic value is \$200m. I don't know of a better long-term investment."

Akirov and El-Rov Properties

currently hold 70% of the company's shares, while the remaining shares are held by the public - including Bank Leumi's institutional investment.

El-Rov is involved in real estate projects and has investments in high tech and investment companies.

The company ended the first nine months of 1994 with a NIS 10m. net profit.

Harish stands firm against EU pact

JOSE ROSENFELD

DESPITE pressure from the Foreign Ministry to sign a new trade agreement with the European Union, Industry and Trade Minister Micha Harish yesterday refused to budge from his opposition to the proposed pact.

Foreign Ministry officials are pushing to conclude the agreement as soon as possible to take advantage of the present political window of opportunity in relations with Europe, which they fear may not last due to the difficulties in the peace process.

"I don't see any reason today to agree to a pact that fails to provide economic answers, even partial ones, to lower our trade deficit with Europe," said Harish. "The way I see things, we want a pure economic agreement which will deal with the \$7 billion trade gap that is only getting worse."

A Foreign Ministry spokesman,

quoting Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, told *The Jerusalem Post* last night that there are considerations that should transcend "short-term and short-sided economic benefits."

Peres said Israel has an interest in close ties with the EU, which is becoming an economic superpower.

The spokesman said Peres insisted it was "deceptive" to believe that any trade agreement with Europe could improve Israel's balance-of-payments problem, and charged that Harish is mistakenly seeking to appease local industrialists, who are pressing for more favorable terms.

Harish disagreed with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' readiness to accept the political benefits of such an agreement at the expense of economics.

David Makovsky contributed to this report.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Elbit subsidiary receives \$9.2m. from US Defense Dept. for R&D: Infratec, a subsidiary of Elbit, has received \$9.2 million from the US Department of Defense for research and development. The money is intended for development of a new generation of discovery and sight systems.

Tadiran workers initiate work sanctions: Tadiran's workers initiated work sanctions yesterday to protest management's plans to restructure the company. The workers committee prevented sub-contractors from entering company premises and prevented the exit of goods.

Tadiran's workers committee representatives said management refuses to involve them in negotiations over plans to separate the company into a number of subsidiaries, controlled by a holding company. The firm's 6,500 workers - employed in Holon, Rehovot and Petah Tikva - fear they will lose their rights after the company is separated.

Red Sea Group to invest \$23 million in building apartment hotel: The Red Sea Group plans to invest \$23 million in construction of an apartment hotel in Ashdod. The four-star hotel, to be situated in the new marina on a 20-dunam plot, will contain 100 rooms, 200 apartment hotels, commercial space and shops.

Simmons mattress company to build factory in Kfar Sava: Simmons mattress company plans to invest \$6 million in construction of a factory in Kfar Sava. The factory, scheduled to open this year, will employ about 100 workers and cover some 7,000 square meters. Simmons said the plant will include a 300-sq.m. hall which will exhibit the world's most advanced sleeping solutions.

Menorah to give mortgages to customers of real estate firm: Menorah Insurance Company will give mortgages to customers of Real Estate Association, a real estate chain, in order to conclude transactions. The company said Menorah's mortgages to its customers will reach about NIS 60 million annually.

Banks may have to return money from exaggerated rates: Banks may be forced to return billions of shekels that they overcharged customers on index-linked loans, the Organization of Bank Customers announced yesterday.

The association said the Bank of Israel is currently examining the possibility of forcing banks to return exaggerated interest rates charged, against the law, on customers repayment of index-linked loans. The association said the banking sector's illegal interest charges are more than NIS 5 billion.

Bank Leumi increasing rates on savings plans: Bank Leumi announced it is increasing its rates on savings plans to the highest offered in the banking sector. The bank said it would, from Friday, offer fixed interest of 4.25 percent annually during the first six months of its two-year plan. On its two-year, index-linked plan, the bank will offer 3.85% annually, instead of 3.5%.

Bank Leumi also announced plans to hold a credit tender offering customers credit for a period of up to 12 months, at a fixed minimum interest of 17.5% annually. The bank is offering a total of NIS 40m. in the framework of the tender. The bank said tender participants will compete for the quantity of credit given and interest paid on it. The tender is intended for business and commercial customers. Customers can submit tender bids of between NIS 50,000 and NIS 1m.

Sanbar - Regional economic cooperation vital: Regional economic cooperation is vital to advancing the peace process, Bank Leumi chairman Moshe Sanbar told the Israel-British Commonwealth Association last week. Failure to cooperate would lead to tensions, he added.

Kessar, Segov set up panel on jet fuel prices: Transport Minister Yisrael Kessar and Energy Minister Gonen Segov decided yesterday that a joint committee would examine the facts which Aviation Services uses to set the price of jet fuel. They also agreed in principle that there is no reason why the provision of aviation services should not be opened to competition by January 1, 1996.

Healthcare Technologies buys 50% equity stake in Gamidor

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

HEALTHCARE Technologies yesterday announced it has reached an agreement to purchase a 50 percent equity stake in Gamidor, an English diagnostic distribution company, for \$800,000.

According to the agreement, Healthcare will pay \$37,000 in cash and the remainder in a loan to Gamidor.

The investment will provide Gamidor with the funds to purchase special equipment, which will be sold in conjunction with

diagnostic kits distributed by the company.

The purchase includes a commitment to provide additional equity funding by cash or by converting loans into premium shares should Gamidor reach annual sales of \$3 million by 1997.

Gamidor estimates revenues for this year will be about \$2.5m.

Gamidor will be responsible for marketing all of Healthcare's product lines in the UK.

The company, through subsidiaries Savoyon Diagnostics and Diatch Diagnostics, develops and manufactures diagnostic kits worldwide.

The company currently has 30 products on the market worldwide, with other products nearing the launch stage.

The deal is subject to the approval of Healthcare's board of directors.

Gamidor is the sole distributor for DADE, Organics, Eurospiral SPA, Bionike and Primus.

'Ministries scuttled planned Teva factory in Bersheeba'

AMIR ROZENBLIT

BEERSHEBA Mayor Yitzhak Rager has blamed the Environment and Health ministries for pharmaceutical company Teva's decision not to build a factory in the city.

Rager said Teva backed out because it would have been required to reveal the formula of its Co-P1 drug for treating multiple sclerosis as part of a survey on how the plant's construction would impact on the environment.

According to Rager, Teva said

this would violate secrecy regarding the drug, and it would only present the environmental study once the factory was ready and an operating license was needed.

Following Teva's decision, Rager sent a letter to State Comptroller Miriam Ben-Porat asking her to investigate the Health and Environment ministries' activities in Beersheba.

Rager also accused Health Ministry district engineer Hadas-

sah Eden of a conflict of interests, saying she worked to scuttle the building of the plant because her husband was turned down for a job there.

The Health Ministry denied Rager's claims, saying the ministry and Eden acted out of purely professional motives to prevent health hazards to those who work or live nearby the site of the proposed plant.

According to a report present-

ed by Health Ministry environmental health engineer Amir Yitzhaki regarding the lack of sufficient information presented by Teva about the plant, the factory would be "a dangerous chemical factory which would house large amounts of flammable, explosive poisonous, materials... and whose operations would emit poisonous gases and other toxic waste."

Yitzhaki said Teva had not sufficiently addressed these problems.

Manufacturers: Gov't should restrain trade liberalization

GALIT LIPKIS BECK

THE government must restrain trade liberalization Manufacturers Association foreign trade and marketing committee chairman Elud Geller said yesterday.

Geller said the government's current liberalization is likely to increase the trade deficit to about \$14.3 billion by the year 2000 from the current \$7b.

According to Geller, a 15.4 percent real annual increase in exports is necessary to reduce the trade deficit within a reasonable period.

Geller said the government should establish a committee in charge of foreign trade matters, headed by the prime minister and made up of economic ministers and business sector representatives.

According to the Manufacturers Association, the committee will initiate regular checks and proposals in the foreign trade field.

The association said the government's signing of foreign trade agreements has opened up international markets, but the country has lost some of its ability to determine imports.

"Every ministry rushes to sign agreements without coordinating with other bodies and without a comprehensive foreign trade policy," he said.

"There is no revision of Israel's overseas representatives in order to gear them toward the Israeli economy's modern requirements," Geller said.

"Industry is exposed and does not receive sufficient encouragement, while the monopolies operating in the services sector provide industry with expensive services that raises costs."

Geller said Israel's exports to new markets in the Middle East, Asia and the Moslem world could reach \$700 million annually.

In addition, he said foreign investments here can grow \$300m. annually to 4.9% from 1.5%.

Geller also called on the government to establish a \$500,000 million fund to provide 20-year loans to firms interested in establishing an overseas distribution network.

MKs approve turning hospital supply unit into independent firm

EVELYN GORDON

THE Knesset Finance Committee yesterday approved turning the Health Ministry's hospital supply unit, Sarel, into an independent company, but deferred for six months the question of whether the new company should sell cheap drugs to the smaller health funds.

The Maccabi and Meuhedet health funds had used the opportunity presented by the incorporation debate to raise a charge of discrimination by private drug suppliers.

The private suppliers, they said, sold drugs much more cheaply to the Histadrut's Kupat Holim Clalit than they did to the smaller health funds, which placed the smaller funds at an unfair disadvantage.

At first, MKs from all parties agreed that the small funds' complaint was justified and suggested solving the problem by having

Sarel sell to the small funds at the same prices offered Clalit by the private suppliers.

Until now, Sarel's business has been confined to supplying government hospitals.

Yesterday, however, Health Minister Ephraim Sneh asked the committee to temporarily drop this demand to enable the incorporation to proceed without any complicating factors.

The incorporation, he said, is necessary to improve the ailing unit's efficiency, and therefore this must be the first priority.

However, he said, he would try to extend Sarel's services to the smaller funds within six months.

The committee, with the exception of Dan Tichon (Likud), accepted this compromise, but asked to see a progress report in half a year.

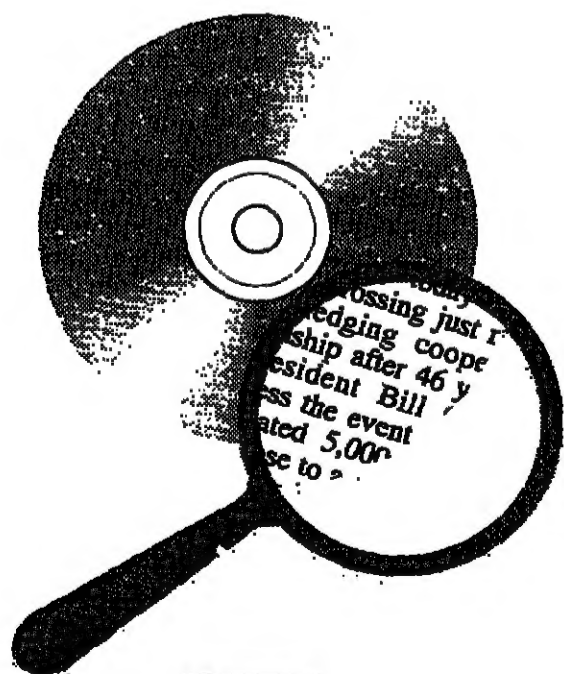
Tichon, however, threatened to turn to the state comptroller, the supervisor of monopolies and the Knesset plenum in an effort to break the private suppliers' "cartel" sooner than that.

"It's a pity the committee postponed this battle for half a year," he said. "It's the Knesset's job to fight against such mafia-like behavior."

The incorporation itself will cost the government NIS 10 million, plus a NIS 20m. loan at 3.8 percent interest to enable Sarel to restock its inventory.

However, NIS 14m. of the 14-year loan will be raised from the sale of the new company's existing inventory.

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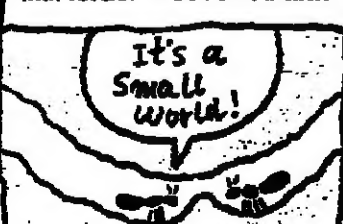
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Patash (foreign currency deposit rates) (29.1.95)				
Currency (deposit term)	3 MONTHS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS	
U.S. dollar (\$250,000)	5.500	6.000	6.625	
U.S. dollar (\$100,000)	5.125	5.500	6.000	
U.S. dollar (\$50,000)	4.750	5.125	5.500	
Swiss franc (SF 200,000)	4.000	4.250	4.750	
Yen (10 million yen)	2.275	2.125	3.500	
	0.625	0.625	0.675	

(Please see higher or lower than indicated according to deposit)

Shekel Foreign Exchange Rates* (30.1.95)				
Currency basket	Buy	Sell	Buy	Sell
U.S. dollar	2.8791	3.0211	2.83	3.07
German mark	1.8677	1.9894	1.84	2.03
French franc	4.7355	5.0525	4.65	5.00
Japanese yen (100)	0.5674	0.5754	0.55	0.57
Dutch guilder	3.6141	3.6586	3.56	3.67
Swiss franc	1.7574	1.7821	1.73	1.81
Spanish peseta	2.2653	2.3863	2.20	2.34
Swedish krona	0.4010	0.4056	0.39	0.41
Norwegian krona	0.4489	0.4553	0.44	0.45
Danish krone	0.4927	0.5067	0.48	0.50
Finland mark	0.5816	0.6045	0.49	0.51
Canadian dollar	2.1035	2.1356	2.07	2.12
Australian dollar	2.2928	2.3267	2.21	2.27
S. African rand	0.8427	0.8548	0.82	0.84
Belgian franc (10)	0.5555	0.5659	0.54	0.56
Austrian schilling (10)	2.7552	2.8346	2.75	2.83
Italian lira (1,000)	1.5693	1.5806	1.52	1.56
Jordanian dinar	—	—	0.17	0.18
Egyptian pound	—	—	0.43	0.45
Israeli sheqel	3.7134	3.7658	—	—
Irish punt	4.6708	4.7358	4.56	4.72
Spanish peseta (100)	2.2653	2.3863	2.21	2.36

* These rates vary according to bank. ** Bank of Israel.

SOURCE: BANK LEUMI

ANDRE LUMBROSO



The blue chips closed generally lower, sometimes on insignificant turnovers.

Osem traded with no change in price on a turnover of only

WORLD MARKET ROUNDUP

ZURICH - Swiss shares closed easier in slack trading in a market lacking factors to trade on. Vol-

WALL STREET REPORT

The Dow Jones industrial average closed 25.91 points lower at 3,832.08, based on early and unofficial data. In the broader market, declining issues led advances 13-8 on moderate trading of more than 320 million shares on the New York Stock Exchange.

	MARK	STERLING	YEN	SFr	FFr
MARK	—	0.4182/85	65.38/41	0.8417/20	3.4709/06
STERLING	2.4015/25	—	157.04/16	2.0215/29	8.3325/49
YEN	1.8284/85	0.6362/70	—	1.2860/77	5.3031/68
SFr	118.74/82	0.4843/47	77.62/67	—	4.1253/43
FFr	0.2660/63	0.1199/00	18.82/84	0.2425/27	—

Prices from 2000 local time

Multi-sided trading

[illegible]

Two-sided trading

[illegible]

		Change
US dollar ...	NIS 3.0040	- 0.07%
Sterling	NIS 4.7719	- 0.42%
Mark	NIS 1.9843	- 0.05%

New York market: 1.1

	Last	Change
DJ Industrials	3091.41	-26.51
DJ Transport	1504.87	-18.83
DJ Util	182.39	-0.16
DJ Comp	1287.82	-8.75
NYSE Industri	313.94	-1.34
NYSE Transport	228.38	-2.84
NYSE Comp	254.9	-0.99
S&P 100	434.75	-1.07
S&P Spot Index	492.49	-1.81

Volume up (in 1000's)	100448
Volumes down (in 1000's)	175801

	Last	Change
FTSE 100	2965.9	-26.3
Tokyo Nikkei average	18752.8	+848.5
Singapore all-share index	507.27	+0.19
Hong Kong Hang Seng index	7342.65	+45.59
Brazil index	119.43	+0.36

NYSE / AMEX Last Change

Micro Technology	2.40825	+0.03125
Journal Cont	7.575	+0.125
Nutram (bioprochem)	3.625	+0.3125
Electri	1.675	+0.125
Eliz Layout	7.5	+0.5
Eliz Layout A	8.5	+0.825
Essex T.	5.75	+0.825
EC	28.25	+1.5

Reverse	12.828	-0.125
Data (Doforty)	5.825	+0.5

[illegible]

MARKETS

	Last Amount	Change Amount
1. <i>Salmonella</i> spp.	100	100
2. <i>Shigella</i> spp.	100	100
3. <i>Yersinia</i> spp.	100	100
4. <i>Escherichia coli</i> spp.	100	100
5. <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	100	100
6. <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	100	100
7. <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	100	100
8. <i>Staphylococcus sciuri</i>	100	100
9. <i>Staphylococcus carnosus</i>	100	100
10. <i>Staphylococcus saprocyticus</i>	100	100
11. <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	100	100
12. <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	100	100
13. <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	100	100
14. <i>Staphylococcus sciuri</i>	100	100
15. <i>Staphylococcus carnosus</i>	100	100
16. <i>Staphylococcus saprocyticus</i>	100	100
17. <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	100	100
18. <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	100	100
19. <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	100	100
20. <i>Staphylococcus sciuri</i>	100	100
21. <i>Staphylococcus carnosus</i>	100	100
22. <i>Staphylococcus saprocyticus</i>	100	100
23. <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	100	100
24. <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	100	100
25. <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	100	100
26. <i>Staphylococcus sciuri</i>	100	100
27. <i>Staphylococcus carnosus</i>	100	100
28. <i>Staphylococcus saprocyticus</i>	100	100
29. <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	100	100
30. <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	100	100
31. <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	100	100
32. <i>Staphylococcus sciuri</i>	100	100
33. <i>Staphylococcus carnosus</i>	100	100
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35. <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	100	100
36. <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	100	100
37. <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	100	100
38. <i>Staphylococcus sciuri</i>	100	100
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40. <i>Staphylococcus saprocyticus</i>	100	100
41. <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	100	100
42. <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	100	100
43. <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	100	100
44. <i>Staphylococcus sciuri</i>	100	100
45. <i>Staphylococcus carnosus</i>	100	100
46. <i>Staphylococcus saprocyticus</i>	100	100
47. <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	100	100
48. <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	100	100
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51. <i>Staphylococcus carnosus</i>	100	100
52. <i>Staphylococcus saprocyticus</i>	100	100
53. <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	100	100
54. <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	100	100
55. <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	100	100
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79. <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	100	100
80. <i>Staphylococcus sciuri</i>	100	100
81. <i>Staphylococcus carnosus</i>	100	100
82. <i>Staphylococcus saprocyticus</i>	100	100
83. <i>Staphylococcus epidermidis</i>	100	100
84. <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	100	100
85. <i>Staphylococcus saprophyticus</i>	100	100
86. <i>Staphylococcus sciuri</i>	100	100

atomic	spot	1,506.4	-0.0081
	Max future (CME)	0.6662	+0.0043
franc	spot	1,966.6	-0.0073
	Max future (CME)	0.793.9	+0.0041
	Max future (CME)	68.41	-0.76
	Max future (CME)	0.01029	+3.8e-005
gold	spot	1,419.6	+0.0052
	Max future (CME)	0.7031	-0.0053
yen	spot	0.7016	-0.0001
	Max future (CME)	0.7577	-0.0005
zinc	spot	5,224	-0.0365
lime	spot	1,993	+11.5
oil	spot	1,899.7	-0.0118
oil	spot	10.575	-0.0001
oil	spot	3,589	-2.0015
oil	spot	1,253.6	-0.0079
oil	future	101	-0.09
oil	future	469.9	-1.05

12 months	7.25	-0.0025
3 months	5.8125	0
6 months	7.1875	0

trans	3 months	4.5925	+0.0825
trans	6 months	4.25	0
trans	12 months	4.5925	0
mark	3 months	5.0625	+0.0513
mark	6 months	5.2912	0
mark	12 months	5.76	+0.0513
ten	3 months	2.3125	0
ten	6 months	2.3125	0
ten	12 months	2.5	0

(Spot market listings are from approximately 1:30 a.m. time. All others are closing quotes.)

Comstock Trading Ltd. (Date 23-JAN-85)

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Ltd.**

US commodities

	Last	Change
ocean (Mar) (CEC)	1373	+2
ocean (Mar) (CEC)	157.45	-4.2
sugar no. 11 (Mar.) (CEC)	74.37	-0
steel (Mar) (CBOT)	388.5	+3
orange juice (Mar) (CEC)	102.7	+0.35
crude oil light (Mar) (CEC)	18.09	+0.14

1857	118
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		Last	Change
Oct:	spot	376.75	-0.2
Nov:	spot	4.75	+0.05

New York metal futures

Carbonium (Apr.)	159.7	+0.55
Carbonium (Mar.)	1.376	-0.008

	Last	Change
Gold AM fix	375.0	-4.1
Gold PM fix	375.0	-2.5
Agur fix	467.5	-8.0
	419.1	-4.4

Comstock Trading Ltd. (Date 22-JAN-83)

SOURCE: ISRAEL DISCOUNT BANK

INTERNATIONAL STOCK PRICE

[illegible]

Timeout turkeys ruin Super Bowl feast

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Court to rule in Meshulam trial

TEL AVIV District Court Judge Amnon Strashnov is expected to rule today on charges against Uzi Meshulam and 11 of his followers, who are indicted for endangering lives, possession and manufacture of illegal weapons, aggravated assault and obstructing justice.

Their trial, which began last August, was interrupted by sporadic rioting by defendants and followers both inside and outside the courtroom.

Meshulam, who fired two sets of lawyers before settling on Tzadok Hugi and Simha Ziv, repeatedly swore in court and called the judge and police "Nazis" and "child murderers."

Each time a hearing was held, Hayarkon police sent large forces to guard the court building.

RAINE MARCUS

Hundreds of Meshulam's followers would demonstrate outside the building against what they described as the theft and sale by government authorities of over 4,000 Yemenite children in the early years of the state.

At one stage in the trial, in which over 100 witnesses testified, Meshulam ordered his lawyers to stop cross-examining witnesses. He also told his followers accused in the case not to participate in court proceedings, and they spent many hearings in the cells downstairs.

The charges stem from events that occurred last March, when Meshulam, who claims to be a rabbi, and some 100 heavily-armed followers, barricaded

themselves in their Yehud house.

At first, the group protested construction work going on nearby. The incident then escalated into a massive and violent protest against the "disappearance and sale of 4,000 Yemenite children."

Meshulam's supporters drew pistols at police officers and threw firebombs at Tel Aviv police chief Cmdr. Gabi Last. Meshulam himself fired shots into the air with an unlicensed pistol.

For six weeks, Meshulam's gang terrorized what had been a quiet neighborhood, turning the house into a fortress.

After several attempts to reach agreements with Meshulam to end the siege, police decided to force its end. Last May, Inspec-

tor-General Assaf Hefetz summoned Meshulam to a "friendly" meeting in the nearby Avia Hotel, where he was arrested.

Meanwhile, 1,000 policemen, border policemen and anti-terror units raided the house. One of Meshulam's followers, 19-year-old Shlomo Assoulin, was killed by a sharpshooter when he shot at a police helicopter.

Meshulam and his followers are currently in Wing 13 at Ramle's Ayalon Prison, where they have reportedly been getting favored treatment and special privileges. The Prisons Service has denied the reports, but a special inquiry commission, headed by former Prisons Commissioner Levi Shaul, has been established to investigate the claims.

Ra'anana Cohen elected head of coalition and Labor faction

LIAT COLLINS

LABOR MK Ra'anana Cohen was unanimously voted coalition and faction head yesterday following the forced resignation of MK Eli Dayan, who voted against the government on the Economics Arrangements Law earlier this month.

"With your election to the post we're turning over a new leaf. Your success is our success," Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told Cohen, after a short ceremony. "I'm in favor of free argument and solidarity of vote, otherwise we'll be handing the government over to others."

"Everything depends on us," said Cohen. "The Likud has started an aggressive election campaign. Because of the problems of lack of unity, pessimism, lack of mutual consideration and



New coalition and Labor faction chairman MK Ra'anana Cohen. (Isaac Harari)

internal criticism there have been breakdowns [in the party's functioning]. If we act responsibly it will be as if the public opinion

polls never were and we'll win the next elections. We can look at the [divided] opposition and be optimistic," he said.

Cohen has formulated a draft copy of party house rules, which determine that a MK who votes against the party line would not be eligible to run for the primary elections.

At the end of the meeting, MK Avigdor Kahalani said he had agreed to meet with the prime minister to discuss his bill strengthening the Golan Heights Law, before the faction discusses it at its meeting next week.

MK Dalia Itzik asked Cohen to ensure that Rabin meet with his MKs. "Over the last two weeks all sorts of things have happened and we have not been consulted with or informed about what's going on," she said.

No-confidence bid over Shabbat meeting defeated

LIAT COLLINS

A NO-CONFIDENCE motion relating to Shabbat desecration by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and other government officials was defeated yesterday 57-43, with two abstentions.

Shas voted against the coalition. Two Tsomet MKs abstained.

The motion, submitted by Mokedet, the National Religious Party, and United Torah Judaism cited a lunch last Saturday, at which Rabin hosted the country's economic and financial leaders. Finance Minister Avraham Shohat and Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel were also present.

"To save a life, it is permitted to break Shabbat, but not to save the stock market," said Avraham Shapira (UTJ), who presented the motion.

"Like a store owner who removes the sign above his store declares that it is closed; whoever takes away Shabbat is closing down the business. Without Shabbat, there is no sanctity. There's nothing," he said.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal, responding for the government, stated categorically that the government in no way intended harming the sanctity of Shabbat, "which has preserved Jewish identity for thousands of years."

He cited precedents of former defense minister Moshe Arens meeting on a Saturday with then prime minister Yitzhak Shamir to discuss a visit by James Baker.

"How much more of this hypocrisy can the House take," asked Labor MK Dalia Itzik. "At the same time you support the no-confidence motion over Shabbat, the opposition leader [Binyamin Netanyahu] has admitted that he that he trampled on the commandment 'thou shall not commit adultery.'"

5,000 haredim rally against Jaffa dig

MORE than 5,000 haredim from Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Bnei Brak demonstrated in Jaffa yesterday to protest what they claim is the desecration of Jewish graves at a dig on Yefet Street.

The demonstrators prayed, blew the shofar and carried signs reading: "Hands off the cemetery," and "Roam [Milo], your honor is on the line," urging the Tel Aviv mayor to halt the building of an underground parking garage in the area where human bones were found.

Rabbi Arye Shecter of Bnei Brak told the demonstrators: "Teddy Kollek started with the dead, and he disappeared. I tell you that Sodom looked much nicer and was much richer than Tel Aviv. Go see what it looks like today."



Histadrut Chairman Haim Ramon catches a nap at the Histadrut convention yesterday, as trade union section head Amir Peretz appears ready to join him. (IPPA)

Histadrut gets new name; membership made voluntary

MICHAEL YUDELMAN

FROM now on, membership in the Histadrut will be voluntary, and every member will have access to information on the Histadrut institutions' activity and its comptroller's reports, the Histadrut convention resolved at its closing session yesterday.

The convention also voted to give the Histadrut a new name - The New General Histadrut of the Workers - but the validity of this vote has been questioned by the legal advisers of both Labor's and the Likud's Histadrut factions.

Labor had given its members freedom of vote on the name issue, but many of them had left the hall before the vote took place.

The Likud has already announced its intention to dispute the name change in a court of

law, because it did not pass by the required two-thirds majority.

Ram's legal adviser Ron Kedar ruled, however, that an ordinary majority is sufficient to make the resolution valid.

Histadrut Chairman Haim Ramon, who had pushed hard for the name change, admitted yesterday that the change was important, "mainly for the purpose of image."

Histadrut Labor faction spokesman Aviram Balzar said yesterday that "this convention was an inflated balloon which has now exploded in Ramon's face. It is obvious by now that the mountain gave birth to a molehill, and all Ram's grandiose reforms will remain mainly on paper. Why,

they couldn't even muster a sufficient majority to pass the name change."

Most of the new leaders' reforms had been removed from the agenda due to Labor's objection, and the fear that they would not have the required majority or that the convention would be disrupted.

This includes large parts of the economic platform of the "new Histadrut," which spoke in favor of a "free market economy" and indirectly paved the way to canceling tenure and other acquired workers' rights in collective wage agreements.

The reforms that were put to a vote had been settled between Labor and Ram in advance, in agreements ensuring that the basic Histadrut structure will be preserved.

Ben-Porat denies misrepresenting Sheves testimony in Terner case

EVELYN GORDON

STATE Comptroller Miriam Ben-Porat yesterday denied misrepresenting the testimony of Shimon Sheves, director of the Prime Minister's Office, to former police inspector-general Ya'acov Terner.

Ben-Porat's statement was submitted to the High Court of Justice at the court's request, in response to a charge raised during a recent hearing on Terner's petition against her. Terner is asking the court to overturn her report on the reason for his forced early retirement, claiming he was not given a proper chance to defend himself.

Terner had said he was dismissed because he refused Police Minister Moshe Shahal's request to change the team investigating former interior minister Aryeh Deri, while Shahal said it was because he held contacts with Labor Party secretary-general Nissim Zivli about becoming Labor's mayoral candidate in Tel Aviv. Ben-Porat found that Terner had lied.

During a hearing on the petition a couple of weeks ago, Terner cited Sheves's testimony as an example of how the comptroller had treated him unfairly. The comptroller, Terner said, had told him that Sheves contra-

dicted his version of events, and he had not known how to react. In fact, however, Sheves had confirmed his version, he said.

The five justices hearing the case had agreed, from the quotes cited during the hearing, that Sheves appeared to have confirmed Terner's version, and asked Ben-Porat for her explanation.

In her response, Ben-Porat noted first of all that the entire question was irrelevant, because her report did not rely on Sheves's testimony at all, and this was explicitly stated in the report. Out of fairness to Terner, she said, she relied only on his own statements, ones he had confirmed, or statements made by people whom Terner himself certified as trustworthy.

However, she said, she had certainly not misrepresented Sheves's testimony; it was Terner who took quotes out of context to make it seem to the justices that Sheves had confirmed his version.

Ben-Porat quoted extensively from the protocols of her interviews to prove her point, beginning with Sheves's statement that - contrary to Terner's version - Terner was accommodating when

Sheves suggested changing the investigation team.

"[Terner] told me [it was] 100% okay," Sheves said. "[He said], 'I will check into the matter, I think this is a legitimate request.' He told me only one thing: That he couldn't not include the [investigators in the decision]."

Later, Ben-Porat said, Sheves also said that Terner "responded that it would be impossible to neutralize the existing investigation team," which appears to contradict his original testimony.

However, she noted, Sheves also later testified that a compromise had been reached, in which the team was partially replaced, but the original members would still participate when necessary - in short, a compromise which, in her words, "went towards [Deri] to the maximum extent possible... but without crossing the red line."

This compromise, she said, meshed with both Sheves's original statement as to Terner's willingness to cooperate, and with his later statement that there was a limit to what he could accept. Furthermore, she said, Sheves's description of the compromise was consistent with the testimony of several of the other police officers.

Bar association violated ethics, High Court told

EVELYN GORDON

THE Tel Aviv Bar Association grossly violated ethical standards to avoid a disciplinary trial of two well-known lawyers, the deputy chairman of the association charged, in a statement to the High Court of Justice yesterday.

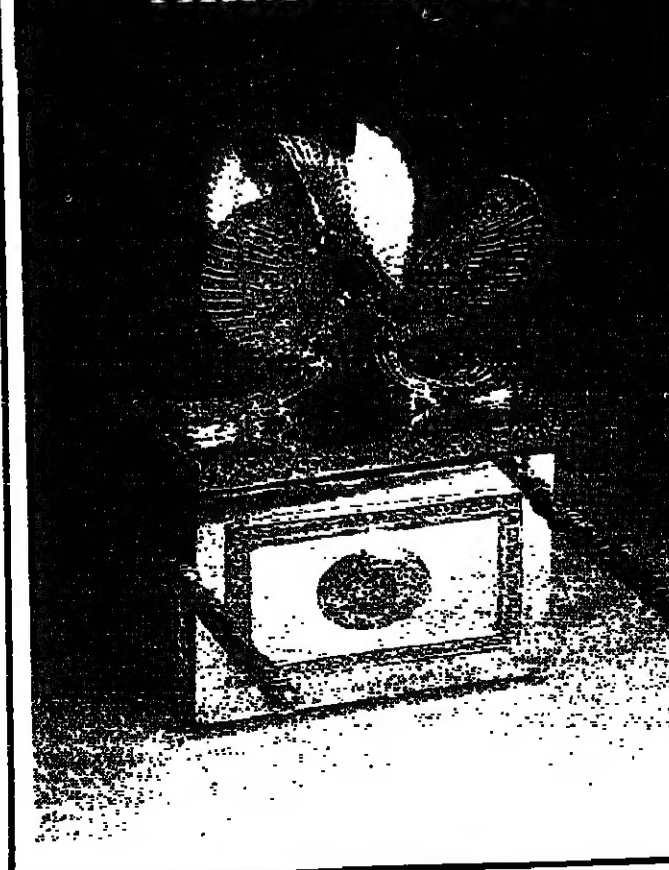
Attorney Chaim Stanger said that after first deciding to file disciplinary charges against attorneys Dov Weisglass and Ya'acov Ne'eman, the bar held repeated votes on the issue until the opposite decision was reached.

The charges were based on a complaint by *Globe* journalist Yoav Yitzhak, whose opponents in a suit in the Jerusalem District Court some years earlier had been represented by Weisglass and Ne'eman.

Yitzhak charged that the two fraudulently promised to have the dispute arbitrated, on the basis of which the court closed the case and refunded their \$25,000 court fee. However, Yitzhak claimed, the arbitration never took place, and Weisglass and Ne'eman had never intended that it should.

Yitzhak has a petition pending before the High Court to force the bar to file disciplinary charges against the two, and Stanger's statement was submitted in this context. In addition to being deputy chairman of the Tel Aviv bar, Stanger was also a member of both its ethics committee and its executive committee during the relevant period.

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